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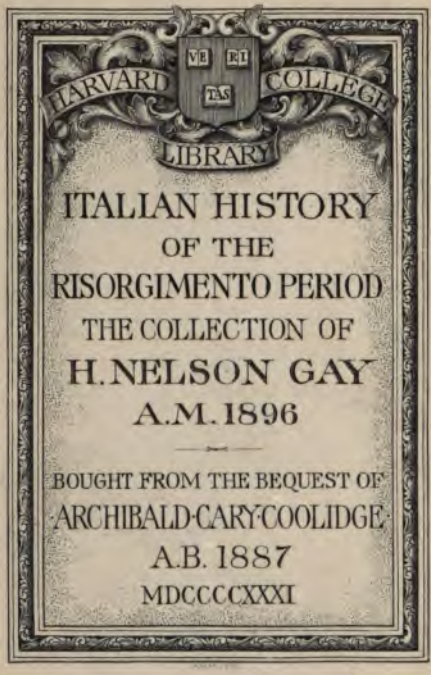

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UNPROTECTED FEMALES

IN SICILY, CALABRIA,

AND ON THE TOP OF MOUNT ÆTNA.

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Dedicated

To my Mother.

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CHAPTER I.

THE DREAM.

PALERMO AT NIGHT—THE DREAM OF THE JOURNEY—GENOA—THE "VILLEGGIATURA"—VOYAGE SOUTHWARD—AWAKING.

WHO has not heard of Sicilian Vesper hymns? . . . they are sounding now, as from our terrace between the palm and the aloe, we watch the sun sink into the Thyrrian sea; the moon rise bright as Ceres' sickle; the lines of palaces east and west, light up each window; the jutting mountains, graceful as rocks from Mount Olympus, fade to shadows; and feel the last heave of the tired sirocco from Africa's sands, stir the balmy air and whisper—Sleep!

Yes, sleep . . . and is it not a dream, and dream

alone, that we have reached the isle beloved of all the gods—have landed in ancient Panormos, now Palermo, once the Moorish, then the Spanish town, where at this moment people say "Don" and "Donna" to each other? Sweet, delusive dream, do not fade. Surely we left our home, came with alpine staff through the glaciers of Switzerland to the foot of Mont St. Gotthard—crossed its rocky pass, wound down to the banks of Maggiore, where the mountains, leaving their sternness at the melting touch of the southern sun, die away in gradual curves and dolphin colours around its waters, letting the plain cover the face of nature with its merry vine, to the feet of their sister Apennines—Monte Rosa alone, blushing consort of Mont Blanc! advancing to the south, and letting her robes of loveliness shine from head to foot, to console the mountaineer who regrets his northern snows.* Did we not mount the dome of that white marble edifice, next in beauty to a work of nature, and see the grandest of the world's panoramas—all the Alps from Milan Cathedral: then, passing every variety of painted building standing in its own clipped orange grove, through fourteen tunnels, arrive in busy Genoa, "where the east still seems

* To be seen from the rail leaving Arona.

knocking at the gate," and where, midst strings of caparisoned and laden mules threading the narrow lanes, waved the white veil over eloquent black eyes and roguish curls; where marble staircases and sleeping lions rose out of dirt, and at each entrance sat one of Michael Angelo's fates plying her distaff; where one street, full of gold and silver, led through magnificent twin "Via,"* to churches whose gorgeousness was redeemed by freshness, and also to smaller temples, hardly cleared of the beds spread for the victims of the cholera-plague now lying beneath those cypresses darkening the ramparts; where Greek sailors, real corsairs with petticoat and sash, jump through marine quadrilles to the uncouth strains of a musician on the cathedral piazza; while on the grand opera stage is danced a political drama called "The Dream of an Exile," the hero portrayed as Garabaldi (who in unfictitious life has retired to till some land of his own in the island of Sardinia, having refused all offers of augmentation of fortune), round whom in vision caper nymphs with the most ingenious clothing, national tri-coloured on the one side, Austrian-striped on the other; which latter, with the appearance of a crowned female with double-

* Nuova and Nuovissima,—the "new" and the "very new."

headed eagle on her chest, representing the empire, drew forth whirlwinds of hissing, while the former, led by a Sardinian fairy with wings of red, green, and white, threw the house into raptures, until the appearance of a Jesuit distributing tracts to little children again raised the storm, only calmed by clouds of cupids showering wreaths of victory on their own dear country, while Austrian orange consumed in flames away. This spectacle, represented night after night, shows how excited the public feeling is against their Hapsburg neighbours, whose Italian subjects fully sympathise in their feelings. Could Milan and Turin but forget their jealousy, both dreading the other's promotion to rank of capital, the fertile plains of Lombardy might yet enrich the rocky crown of Piedmont.

Did we not next morning ride round the walls of Genoa, walk through her palaces, lose ourselves midst the endless arcades, where flash the sparks from a thousand anvils of a world of blacksmiths: then by the Cornice di Levante "wind along a coast of beauty, bordered by a sea of loveliness," where headland of marble ran from olive grove; bay of blue swept to the foot of many-coloured village; latine sail flew to the horizon; cactus, caper, fig, edged our path? Fair scene! with what

bright words from the palette of the mind can I paint you?

While all these charms stretched out to the right, to the left were displayed the wonders of Italian "Villeggiatura villas;" each hill crowned with them, from the stately porticoed palace to the little summer-house all vine and trellis; a thousand fancies expended in their forms and colours: here a crimson fortress, with many turrets, is guarded by mailed warriors in glossy paint; by them stands a temple, whose tinted arches shelter all the Muses; lapis lazuli and malachite form the walls of another; at this window sits a cat ogling a canary; at that, a monkey chases a parrot—to have a notion of Italian fresco you *must* follow this road—and how bright it all looked in the sun!

The first day's journey brought us to Sestri, passing through Rapallo, beneath whose stone columns sat the female population at their rich silk-lace work. Next day commenced the passage of the "Apennini," or Little Apennines, where rocks, grass, goats, shepherds, and stretches of distant peaks, were the subjects; till a long descending wind brought Liguria's capital, La Spezzia, in view—its gulph set as turquoise in silver rim of round white-headed olives.

A steamer was embarking boats-full of red-capped peasants, to hew wood in the island of Corsica, clearly rising in the distance; how I wish we had gone with them! for here came the nightmare of the dream—torrents of rain, such as Italian skies can pour down for five days running, as if to make up for all their laughing moods. The house, the country, were swamped, there was nothing but rain to sketch; within a few miles rolled the unbridged river Macra, impassable by inundation and by extortion. We had been foolish enough to join in a carriage from Genoa with an Hibernian family, who had never been abroad before, could speak no foreign language, gave the Italians whatever they asked, and let themselves, and of course us also, be imposed upon by the coachman, who, being handsomely paid for the support of himself and horses during the stoppage, when the river became passable felt disinclined to cross without a bribe; and but for the arrival of a hard-headed Scotchman and family, who declined being either cheated or delayed, we might have spent five days longer guessing at Byron's residence, Lerici, through the fog, and visiting in wet boats the freshwater spring in the bay. This annoyance can happen at the same spot no more, as immediately the govern-

ment decided upon making La Spezzia a naval harbour, the river was bridged in stone.

At Sarzana, on the opposite side, were some beautiful Roman ruins, and the villas reappeared here and there; but how that drenching had altered their aspect! certainly, in rain, no draggled-tailed tragedy queen could look more wretched than Northern Italy. Custom-house officers, begging a few francs beneath an arch with ducal crown, ushered us simultaneously into Modena, tumble-down villages, squalor, and ragged wretchedness. Carrara, with its scooped mountains, and the blocks of marble passing through it to the sea, were the only interesting objects. The same official begging introduced Tuscany to our notice; then, after stopping one more night on the road at Pietra Santa, and passing the next morning through a much improved country, a white tower rising out of the perpendicular marked—Pisa. There, traveller, Cathedral, Baptistry, Cemetery, Gates, are beautiful as any you will see further on your pilgrimage.

Then Morpheus flew off with us to Leghorn, and after lulling us through two smooth nights on the sea, brought us opposite to that fair mask on a foul face—the Bay of Naples. Vesu-

vius was flaming; as we again sailed away at night her fire alone was visible in the darkness. At daybreak, an island with advancing capes lay upon the waters; I think we landed—and it was *no* dream, for a hundred gongs strike the hour together, the sun flashes bright through the casement, the same rocks stand in the sea, a little lizard runs over the myrtle's vase, and to see Palermo is our day's employment.

CHAPTER II.

PALERMO.

ATTACK OF COACHMEN-BANDITS—THE STREETS—THE CHURCHES—THE CATHEDRAL—THE PALACE—"SICILIAN VESPERS" BELL—THE PEOPLE OUT OF DOORS—THE LOVE LETTER.

And now, Palermo, O Palermo! you lie before us in broad daylight, but it is no easy thing to explore your streets. On putting foot outside the door, the narrow lane is instantly filled by crazy carriages, others are approaching from each end; the drivers implore us to enter them all, edge us sideways to the houses, fill the air with cracking of whips, and accompany us in a long line through the town. In future, we promise to enter the first which offers, but for a first look at a new place allow us to stroll and saunter; else, too, how could we vanquish the army of beggars? who, eager to buy lottery tickets, await the arrival of each new traveller, sees once for all if he intend contributing to their purse during his stay, and either persecute or leave him in quiet through the whole of it, according to their reception; thus, a first *grano*

given, marks him a victim; one refused, a being beneath their notice.

Narrow pavements edge both sides of the four lively streets which run across each other through Palermo, to the four gates, Felice, Maquada, Toledo, St. Antonino, and meet in the centre of the town, where four mural fountains send gushing waters from beneath white satin banners and tinsel decorations, surrounding the Madonna's image and the opera bills; in the middle stands an iron bridge on wheels, to be used for crossing very muddy places, and an article of all well-appointed Sicilian streets. The young men are passing on glossy donkeys, to take their early morning airings; the merchants are talking together in the pretty drawing-rooms, opening on the street, which form their Exchange; confectioners have hardly begun to wave their long rods with coloured paper tails, over the collecting flies; lines of yellow-clad convicts in chains are marching to their early work; baby priests, all hat, are going to class; and Donna Luisa, with her duenna, slips into that church. Let us follow her; as there are three hundred sacred edifices to be seen, and they close at mid-day. She kneels before one of Vandyke's holy, melancholy pictures; around is every

rich device in which marble of radiant colours can combine; at the pillars are scenes from Scripture, raised and large—on the one against which we lean is Jonah's story; the ship, the whale, all of true shades and magnificent polish; behind a gilded grating are the nuns of Santa Caterina, whose church it is.

The interiors of San Salvatore, San Giuseppe, in which is a small Holy Family by Raphael, La Martorana, L'Olivella, and La Casa Professa, are equally trophies of Sicilian marble mosaic, very like that of Florence. The Duomo alone—most poetic building!—is severely simple inside; outside, in imagination, what I dream a noble Spanish cathedral. Semi-Moorish, semi-Gothic, it stands on a piazza (guarded on one side by its sweet patron, Santa Rosalia, crowned with roses, on the other by St. Olive with her wand of peace); a thousand tiny arches, with flowery circlets traced on its long lofty walls, till one with vast span springs from the end to unite them with the cardinal's palace, from whence issue troops of red-robed servitors. Within the fane, Frederic Barbarossa lies in his sarcophagus of porphyry, midst the gorgeous tombs of Roger and the early Norman kings. The lofty aisles have lately been restored, and though in different style

to the enchanting exterior, eighty granite columns, supporting unvarnished arches, are noble to the eye; the rosy saint's altar is of lapis lazuli; at festivals alone are tawdry decorations allowed to mar the solemn place.

During the early morning, figures were gliding in and out and kneeling at the confessionals; graceful women, their steps unheard, advanced, crossing themselves, through the dim arcades. We lingered long (little thinking how romantic an incident would arise from our musing): on leaving, looked from the porch at where stood Cicero's house opposite, now Prince Ninfa's; threw a dazzled glance up at the cathedral stones glowing golden in the sun which had preserved them seven centuries; then reposed by the adjacent convent of the Seven Angels, and watched the poor placing their dishes and bottles upon the stand next to the parlatory window, which, revolving, returned them full of meat and wine. What a delight we felt in this little peep back upon the Middle Ages!

The convents and monasteries take it in turn to supply food, that every day the poor may be sure of a meal; there is, besides, an immense, well ordered building, called "Albergo dei Poveri," where want is investigated and relieved; another

aids the indigent nobility, thus making begging an unnecessary speculation.

Now on to the Palace! at whose doors a carriage is waiting for the present inhabitant, Prince Castelcicala, so long ambassador in England, become a very old man, and sinecure Lieutenant-Governor of Sicily, business affairs being really carried on by five directors, who represent the ministers of the Neapolitan Cabinet. The prettily painted royal apartments, with arched roofs, marble floors, and small quantity of classic furniture, give a good idea of a well-kept Italian residence: on a pillar is placed the last ram of Syracuse, which, with its bronze fellows, used to sit at the four corners of the town, and the wind rushing through their hollow bodies roared out of their mouths, telling from which quarter the Eolus came—an arrangement, they say, of Archimedes'.

The broad staircase with open colonnades and Moorish frescoes, leads to a chapel where a dim daylight all but conceals the thousand gems which form its arches, sides, and floor. Built in the eleventh century by Saracenic hands for Christian masters, entirely of minute mosaic set in gold, it is indescribably eccentric and beautiful. Beneath, in a pillared vault, expired four noble Sicilian

matrons, from suffering the slow test of starvation, rather than betray the retreat of their husbands and their forces, during one of the desperate struggles of the island with oppressors. Worthy sisters to those whose lovely hair strung the bows to dart arrows from the walls through the bosoms of their invaders! Yet we northerns say the ardent Sicilians fail in constancy. When their hearts are touched, no people are capable of more enduring sacrifice; and, after a long journey among them—faulty, uneducated as they are, we can unhesitatingly echo their character to be "more sincere than the French, more courteous than the English, more refined than the Germans." But remember, traveller, you must be pleasing to them; a cold, distant mien, as if one were something superior, is felt twenty yards off, like electricity; a shade of suspicion wounds that "sensibilita" of which they have so large a share. The whole pleasure of your journey within the island depends upon whether you prove *simpatico* (attractive) or *antipatico* (repellent) to them: if prepared to be the latter, you had better not go; if the former, you will have everything your own way.

A gentlemanly priest of the Chapel-royal, who spoke English well, and said there were most curious MSS. he could show in its archives to

those interested, escorted us out by the exterior of the Palace, which has been restored in the olden style; as also the beautiful Porta Maqueda; then following the line of ancient fortifications, with their Artesian wells, and re-entering by the Porta St. Antonino, he led us before a tiny church with two eastern domes and towers, Santo Spirito, chosen from its age to first strike the sounds at vesper-time, which rid the island of the usurping French. The interior is mouldering away; two ancient paintings on wood, inscribed 1184, are its venerable curiosities; one representing the Madonna inscribing a manuscript by an open window, through which is seen the eagle, forsaking his flight to the sun, and soaring down to her superior brightness. In the sixth century, one of the monks of this chapel became Pope Agatone at Rome.

The remaining churches are only remarkable as specimens of singular devotion: gilded plaster columns hung with showy draperies; chandeliers in yellow muslin; shrines of favourite saints, surrounded by pink wax representations of parts of the human body, healed by their intercessions; dark pictures of the infant Saviour in his mother's arms, with huge silver crowns starting from the canvas; his tiny fingers covered with rings, en-

circling her jewelled neck; skeleton saints, in ball dresses and glass cases; unromantic confessionals of concave perforated brass, let into the wall, like warming-pans; an occasional fine face or form as cherub or angel bearing the shell of blest water at the door; a smell of garlic and incense; beggars inside and out—these are their most striking features to a stranger.

In the University are trophies of the exploring taste of our young countrymen: two of whom, some years ago, discovered ancient bas-reliefs of great value at Selinuntium; one representing Perseus, another Hercules, a third a triumphal car.

Now let us take one of the carriages whose driver has kept us in sight the whole day, and a few minutes will bring us to the *Ziza*, dwelling of the last Emir who lingered behind his Moorish brethren. Here, in this marble basin, his young daughters bathed their soft, brown limbs, surrounded by frescoed walls of such thickness as kept out summer heat, and which stand firm now, sheltering a Sicilian family, who dwell above, and allow us to mount the solid stair, to see how well the *Ziza* bears its Arab name, *Agreeable*, given it when dark swimming eyes looked down from its turretted roof upon what we still see: Palermo, standing in its

shell of gold, or *Conca d'oro.* Thus they call the plain of richness which, stretching, oval-formed, to the feet of the sheltering mountains, yields all that Eden could have had; seaward float the Lipari isles, delicate and clear; the headland capes run far out and mark a line betwixt air and ocean, both so blue, save where a soft white mist, in pointed mould, rises and gives the heart one throb, for Ætna's cone. . . . The town lays beneath in all the eastern squareness of marked light and shade, and flattened roofs; here and there a palm springs forth and vies with the towers in grace . . . we gaze on, till sounding gongs, striking a hundred hours at once, seem calling the Mussulmen to prayer, and we women must descend before their turbaned heads crowd the court and stairs.

Drive back through Palermo, *Cocchiere!* It is now afternoon, and the streets are full of rags, tatters, priests, and equipages: the paper fans are in busy agitation over the sweets, the fruit stalls are festooned with pomegranates and figs of Barbary; the little boy in the basket on that man's back, can pop up and pull off the passers' hats, and pop down again without being seen by his victims in the crowd; carriages and carts fill up the narrow streets, the shops are transacting business

on the pavement, so of course jamming up pedestrians anyhow against the wall; gentle Donna Luisa has gone home long since, and is looking through the crimson-striped blinds on that rich-sculptured balcony, so hid by clothes a-drying; above are lines of windows, barred with iron, elegant as lacework, and leaving peeps of sweet faces in religious garb, who daily quit their convent cells to take this glance at the world. The upper stories along the street are beautiful and grand; the lower, rows of hovels, stalls, and shabby shops; in a few *caffè*, sit noblemen who are too fine to walk, too poor to drive, and whisper *Inglese*, as we pass; their rich relations rattle in gaudy carriages through the triumphal arch to the Marina, a drive along the sea-shore worthy of Neptune's car; a young Bacchus, seated on a barrel, and preceded by beating drums, proclaims a ship laden with good wine has reached the harbour; all is miscellaneous, rapid movement. We return home stirred by the animation, and who would say they were not in a romantic land, where Spanish blood and chivalry course together through the people's veins, on finding a beautiful little note with the following words lying on their table? Its contents will show the character of the people better than

any description: really Don Quixote must come back again!

"Or ora, 9 a del $\frac{17}{9}$, 57.

"Madamigella!

"Fino dal primo momento che ebbi la fortuna di vedervi nella Chiesa Matrice, mi infiammiste d'una tal simpatia per Voi che (cosa volete, Madamigella gentilissima!) non potrebbe certamente essere maggiore. In vista di che pregherei l'innata dolcezza e bontà vostra di voler accordarmi un abboccamentto sia con voi, od anche, come meglio vi piace, con vostra Madre, dove e quando vorrete per vedere se trovando il mio affeto l'indispensabile corrispondenza, conciliato tutto il resto, questa nostra accidentale vicinanza potesse farsi durevole.

"Al Cancello del vostro Albergo depongo il presente con i fiducia entr'oggi di ricevere dallo stesso un desideratissimo vostro risposto.

"Compatite, Madamigella, garbatissima, vi prego, il mio ardire ritenendolo però come consequenza dei vostri pregi fisici e morali, ed abbiatemi quale con tutta stima, pari all' ossequio, lonore, e piacere di protestarmi.

"Vostro umilissimo devotissimo servitore,

"————"

The substance in plain English, shorn of compliments, of this truly Sicilian document is:—

"From the first moment, Madamigella, in which I had the good fortune to see you in the Cathedral church, you inspired me with such a 'sympathy' (excuse me) as could certainly not be exceeded. In consequence, I would pray your innate kindness to allow me to address some words to you, or to your mamma; to know if there is any chance of my affection being returned, and arrangements made to let this accidental meeting be everlasting. I leave this at your hotel, impatiently hoping this day to receive a reply. Forgive, amiable young lady, an infatuation caused, etc. etc., and hoping to be able to express the high consideration which I feel for you.

"Your humble, devoted servant,

"————"

whose noble and honourable name I must not tell.

CHAPTER III.

PALERMO'S WAYS.

INTERIORS OF THE HOUSES—WAY OF LIVING—VALUABLE PAINTINGS AND OLD LACE—DRAWING LOTTERY PRIZES—THE MIRAGE—ENGLISH SERVICE—THE GARDENS—FAIR LADIES AND THEIR CAVALIERS—THE ROYAL VILLA—MONTE PELLEGRINO—THE CATACOMBS.

FUTURE young ladies who visit Sicily, and may be disposed to look favourably on propositions for remaining there (perhaps better than going to New Zealand), might wish to know what the interiors of the houses of the upper classes are like. Of course they are all *Palazzi* (palaces), nothing under; and the one next door to the hotel, belonging to Prince Trabbia, is a type of the rest. They must enter it by the terrace, or the horrors of the courtyard and outer staircase may prevent them getting any farther. The state or reception-rooms on the first floor, the *piano nobile*, are really handsome; the dreariness of their marble vastness being relieved by pretty pastorals, painted on the walls and ceilings; mythological tapestries worked

by the female Trabbias, on the floors and windows; and so much gilding around the mirrors and cornices, it takes an ounce of gold a day to keep it brilliant. The family, now in exile, lived on the upper story; and, unless they had been brought up in anti-Sicilian ideas, would be found by any rash morning-caller, sipping their coffee with heads wrapped up in old handkerchiefs or nightcaps, bodies in ragged cotton or dressing-gowns, feet in shoes just good enough to burn over the brass basins of charcoal (*braceiere*, used to warm and suffocate), until two o'clock—when, gay as gad-flies, they would step into their carriage, take a few turns on the Marina, or walk into the Flora; then, after a frugal meal at sunset, adjourn to the Opera, to see and receive all their acquaintance.

Every now and then a rich family fancies giving a dazzling entertainment, and spends a fortune on it; another may have a fairy festival at their neighbouring villa. On the three days in July devoted to Santa Rosalia, the sea glows with brilliant revelry; but anything like a friendly round of visiting, or cosy meeting, is unknown: education being below par—literature *nil*—politics the high road to the galleys—conversation *must* flag: their ardent nature requires some vent—gambling supplies the channel.

They are accused of flirting: idle people in other countries often kill their time with that; but want of natural affection is the last vice to be found among them: an *affectuose* people is their own estimate of themselves, and they are deeply sensible of their disadvantages. They were also the first to treat their lunatics kindly: a large establishment for which purpose still flourishes.

But what astonished us most was the fine arts having left their native clime. Music, except on the mandolines of the rustics, was unheard; for the Opera being used as a conversazione-house, no one thinks of what is on the stage. Sculpture cannot earn her daily bread; mediocre sonnets are only written by people in love; and the estimation of painting may be fixed by the fact of a young lady we visited not being able to tell us the subject or the artist of the genuine Spagnolettos and Velasquez, which hung upon the walls of her father's house; reminding us of a party of Americans, who, on entering the room in the Pitti Palace at Florence, containing specimens of the earliest school, exclaimed, "O, these are Chinese!" Yet, glancing round her walls, we could hardly help thinking how hideous was a collection of dark brown saints and crimson martyrdoms! though the very name of an old master,

who repeats the same class of subject over and over again, is enough to send connoisseurs into ecstasies, who would not look at a lovely, touching modern picture; they need not try to get possession of any of these, their owner having too much money and pride to part with such heirlooms; like the family jewels, which are also said to be remarkably fine. Old lace is to be picked up a great bargain in some of the convents: the present generation of nuns having turned their talents to making sweetmeats and preserves, each season having its own: thus, at Christmas, we were presented with delicious lilac almond-rock.

In this country, the Government kindly provides excitement instead of employment for the poor. The traveller will notice in all towns certain parts of the street where it is impossible to pass, such is the dense and ragged crowd, which sends him into the gutter. The rabble is besetting the office for lottery-tickets. There, for one grano (less than a halfpenny) can be purchased the chance of a fortune. Who would drudge at work with such a possibility flashing on his imagination? On the Piazza, where stood the Inquisition up to the end of last century, now stands the Temple of Fortune; on Saturday afternoons her devotees can be seen

nibbling lettuces, and looking vaguely up at plastered pillars, between which is a balcony hung with red, supporting an urn, beside which stands a child in white. A polite ragamuffin showed us the way through a file of soldiers to a staircase leading behind this frontage, where were seated the judges in their robes, before large volumes on decorated tables. A crowd of priests and devotees (to Fortune) of the upper classes, stood around; at the sounding of a bell the white-clad child put its hand into the urn, held up the ticket to the crowd, then to the judges, who inscribed the number in their book, and sent a herald forward to proclaim it to the excited people, who roared in chorus, as if all had won; while a fat rosy monk next to us was the real winner, and as such, warmly congratulated by his attendant acolytes. One of the judges came in for the next piece of luck. Five prizes in all were drawn: a small number, considering the whole scum of Palermo seemed floating below. Some hollow-cheeked idlers had gained the remainder, enough to feast their fellow-lazzaroni for a month, then carry them off to the fever hospital; or else to invest (often the case) in other tickets, and fill up the time in nibbling more lettuces or assassinating—the latter occupation always following

these edifying weekly events, by which the Government clears £200,000 annually to support its Swiss legions, who now enter Sicily, contrary to original compact, and are obliged, ere they arrive, to go as far south as Leghorn to embark: the Genoese, since they have been free, hooting them through the streets as "tyrants' tools."

It took long gazing on the loveliness of Palermo's bay to soothe the irritation raised in us by the late scene. Presently the lights of the crescent-shaped town circled one by one round the whole horizon, and floated on the waves in all the beauty of mirage by night. So rare a scene, it was surely to celebrate some mermaid's bridal! By day, the fair delusion more often hangs in the deceiving air, making the isles far off to the west appear in the centre of the bay, and reversing Stromboli and the Eolian group. The "Fata Morgana," or fighting warriors, saints, and other battlings in the skies, seems to have been pictured in the storm by unshriven sinners, when expecting earthquakes, or the marine convulsions called "Mare-Muoti," sea-quakes.

On Sunday morning there was Church of England service at the Consul's; the clergyman and singing provided by the rich merchants, of whom there was a considerable assemblage, and to one of

whose houses (a heavy one) we had an introduction; but as it did not bring any other acquaintances, we can say nothing of their proceedings, except that they complained of a difficulty in procuring eloquent clergy for their salary of a hundred pounds a-year.

At one o'clock the military band played in the Flora, a charming garden full of tropical plants, statues, marble seats with trimmed myrtle backs, pools, and running fountains, which had been freshly ornamented with flowers and mosses. Here is one trickling its crystal through roses laid between two opening shells, placed by a dryad's hand; the dark Palermitans stand around, gentlemanly and well made; the ladies interesting, with faces full of expression, and their splendid hair plaited in a thousand ways

> To string,
> Not the warlike, but Cupid's bow.

Why did they check its action with a bonnet, when the light meshes of a veil would have been so many loopholes for his dart, and matched the fans they so dangerously waved? Alas! how little those nations understand their fascinating interests, who forsake their national costume for Parisian

imitations, which require the small *pincée* figure and monkeyish face to give them effect.

The promenade over, all drove to the avenue of the Real Favourità, whose name in the last revolution was changed to Libertà, then shifted by returning powers to the former one, which makes people, when conversing, say in joke, instead of "I take the libertà" (liberty), "I take the favourità." They are also fond of saying to an unpopular person, "Spia che ora è"—"Look what o'clock it is;" but pronouncing it so that it appears to be, "*Spy*, what o'clock is it?"—for the Sicilians *will* have their hits against the Government, unlike the subdued Neapolitans; and the traveller must bear in mind he cannot abuse them with impunity. Could their high spirit be but properly directed, the world would gaze with jealousy on its achievements, as the sun above them is just hot enough to warm to ardour, not weaken to langour.

Near the Drive is the English Garden, formed by sloping flowery banks and untrimmed trees, almost the only shady place in the whole island, without 6,000 feet of climb to Ætna's forest zone. The Favourità palace is a pretty little Chinese pepper-box; its nicely cropped orange-garden, neat as parsley-beds, varied by fountains; the flowers,

after the national fashion, shut in a division by themselves. A room in the house is painted with ingenious coolness, light cooling creepers hanging round damp-falling walls; in the centre a spread table rises through the floor at the sound of a bell, letting the royal party dine without visible attendants. At the Olivuzza, nearer the tower, are the gardens of two princes, where the lover of plants will be able to get some good seeds and cuttings; also at the Botanical Garden, behind the Flora, he must notice the India-rubber and locust-tree: mushroom-producing stones are sometimes to be found.

The first clear morning should be devoted to the ascent of that Gibraltar-rock, Monte Pellegrino, which stands so majestically isolated from the coast, and guards the port. Near its summit rests Sta. Rosalia, who at sixteen years of age chose its grottoes for her dwelling-place; her sweet form, chiselled in marble and robed in gold, lies upon the inmost altar; above, from the summit of her mountain tomb, a wide view of loveliness speaks to the taste for nature of the youthful saint.

There remains another sight in Palermo, so national we must view it,—so painful, would we could escape it. Are you, reader, fond of our old

English churchyards, all elegy and shade? How would the sight affect you of 10,000 grimy skeletons hung by the neck in vaulted niches? others whose glass-coffins show them in pumps and ball-dress,—livid children crowned with roses,—women, with a leer of life in death, robed in satin, their poor woody arms poking out blond sleeves—bones and dust, dressed in all the tawdriness which, worn in life, shrinks from daylight? Yet, to become one of these is a consolation to a dying Palermitan; he or his friends will make deep sacrifices for this pre-eminence. The Capuciner Monastery possesses an earth, or chalk, which preserves the body tolerably for a few years; then a tawny hue creeps on o'er contracting nerves and limbs, avenging the cheated grave a hundredfold. On All Souls' day crowds of living, each with taper, descend and view their friends' remains,—(has lover ever visited a woman once adored?)—some bringing fresh shreds of finery to replace the old; others looking at the new arrivals, and talking glibly of their antecedents; here and there an untapered niche signifies "this inmate is forgotten, let him make way for another;" over that coffin bends a young woman, whose servants dress the body in this year's fashions. Mothers!—to realize

all the horrors of this place in one,—beneath his jaunty cap, *that child has glass eyes!*

But as you hurry up the steps between the two pictures of the death of the good and bad man, and the stanza on dissolution, be not too severe in condemning the Sicilians: all nations have their barbarous customs; and some very civilised people, if consulted, would rather be tortured dead than alive.

One day afterwards we were waiting near a barrack, formerly a monastery, and looking by chance down an old grating in the yard, saw all the defunct monks standing in gown, cowl, and rosary, with here and there some white beard left among them.

CHAPTER IV.

PALERMO'S NEIGHBOURHOOD.

VIEW ON THE ROAD TO BAGARIA—ECCENTRIC PALACES—LOVE STORY—SUMMER AND WINTER HABITS—DISCOMFORTS FOR VISITORS—EXPENSES—THE MAGNIFICENCES OF MONREALE—PREPARATIONS FOR DEPARTURE—EXCURSION TO TEMPLE OF SEGESTE AND RUINS OF SELINUNTIUM.

LET us now set off for a refreshing drive to Bagaria, the Richmond of Palermo, six miles along the coast, and watch Cape Zaffaro and his train of mountains changing their shapes every moment, and the beautiful fishing-boats, with high prows curled up like tails, reflecting their many colours in the floating foreground. The road is filled by rough omnibuses full of peasants, who have been fulfilling *vote* or vows in the capital; and the women have left there the bright attire to wear for the next year black robes worked with white.

The charm of an English villa is in cool seclusion; that of a Sicilian one must be in as much publicity and little shade as possible. The countless palaces of Bagaria stand in trying contour, on

raised mounds of interesting gravel, with a few trim flower-beds trying to cut through them; paths lead from one house to the other; the inmates, when they come to inhabit them for a few weeks, make the exile from the town as imperceptible as possible, by carrying on rounds of "calls" from morning to night. One palace alone has an avenue, at the end of which we were put down, escaping the awful town we had the fatal curiosity to visit afterwards, and found there really were more wretched things in the world than our philosophy had yet dreamt of. Prince Palagonia's father had a taste for ornamental monsters, of which the son has removed the most remarkable, leaving a circle of mitigated ones to amuse the curious. The rooms of the house are also magnificently eccentric, with their walls and ceilings of looking-glass, portraits in variegated marbles, and embroideries of gold and coral. The other palaces can be explored by conscientious sight-seers if they wish; they will find attached to Prince Butera's a little chapel, with kneeling wax figures in Trappist garb, to commemorate the sacrifice which a young Sicilian maiden made to atone for having driven a devoted lover to a cell and despair, she herself assuming the habits of that rigid order, and passing

her existence by his side, undiscovered till her dying day.

The Telegraph, upon the highest point of the ground in the neighbourhood, is a pretty walk, and gives a fine coast-view, through the telescope of an intelligent young man stationed there, and who refused money, as the Sicilians generally do unless needy. Cefalù and ancient Termini were very clear. Looking down upon the crowd of palaces, nearly all belonging to princes, and standing each upon a piece of land the size of a pocket-handkerchief, and such a town at their doors, was quite a new style of prospect. To do justice to their taste, I may mention the natives only inhabit them in the season of spring and autumn freshness, always retiring during summer heat to the narrow streets of their capital town for shade, passing the long day in drowsy siesta, and at night, when sounds the hour which brings repose to us, commencing their life of movement. Moonlight sails upon the sea are then no fiction; the "Flora's" evening flowers open to fanning crowds; and the Marina bears endless carriages with merry families to breathe the "fresco" on the mountain slopes. Business must flag very much in summer. In winter, though many invalids come for warmth,

and once the Empress of Russia among them, the thermometer may be higher than at St. Petersburg; but we did not suffer so much from indoor cold in Poland. The sun is intensely scorching, the wind miserably cold, and the more penetrating from being unsuspectedly still as air. The best houses for strangers, and the large hotel, look to the north, and are never visited by a stray sunbeam in front. Some apartments in the Belmonte Palace, under Monte Pellegrino, have the rising rays from the east; but I earnestly recommend invalids to pause before they leave their comfortable homes for marble-halls without fireplaces, where a pan of charcoal gives but the choice of asphixiation, or a chronic affection of chattering teeth from open doors.

With the exception of aspect, hard pillows, and the want of an English newspaper, the hotel was excellent; fireplaces had been made in most of the rooms, which were clean and carpeted; the dinner at the "table d'hôte" was of the best quality; the charges, when we came to an understanding, not unreasonable, particularly for those who stayed some time; the landlord is an easy, good-natured fellow, who made his fortune as a courier, yet helped me to resist, instead of backing, the demand

(eight tari) of the boatmen, for occupying ten minutes in landing us from the steamer; a fuss always following the want of a pier at a landing-place. We found in future the best way to manage was either to make an arrangement over the side of the steamer, or to lay down what we thought fit, and walk off without listening to nonsense about tariffs: the same men were sure to come up grinning the next morning, and offer to take us a sail, saying, in good English, "Ave a boat, Mammy?" and remaining at our service during our stay. The traveller should get a notion how much things ought to be charged from some native, then name his own price to whoever he is dealing with; after a few expostulating "Ha Excellenza's," with a sly look lurking in their merry eyes, they will take it cheerfully, be civil, then grateful, for a small "buona mano" extra. The exchange upon England has been depressed for some years; the proper value of one pound is sixty taris, but it only passes for fifty-seven. The coins are the same as at Naples, the carlino of ten grains being called a tari; the grano, a bajocco; the piastres, pezzi of twelve tari: but accounts are kept in ducati of ten tari, and oncie of three ducati. Sufficient change should be taken from Palermo for the journey

through the interior, where foreign money is only accepted as a favour, at a great loss. I will put down some of the fixed expenses, the others entirely depend upon whether terms are arranged beforehand or not; for instance, at a provincial town, acquaintances who succeeded to the same apartments we had had for eight tari a-day, paid fifteen ducati for them. The Sicilians, celebrated diplomatists in all ages, fancy they may as well profit by the lavishness of those to whom money is no object. In Palermo carriages are two tari an hour; for the environs a little more. At the palace the royal porter, priest, and gentlemen who showed their respective departments, were all pleased with a trifle; and a tari may be considered to go as far as a franc.

The most beautiful drive in the neighbourhood is to Monreale, on the summit of a hill, up whose side climbs an excellent road, bordered with cacti, each prickly leaf crowned with a gorgeous red flower in summer, in autumn with the oval fruit called figs of Barbary, deliciously refreshing, but guarded with minute prickles, dreadful to the ungloved hand which steals one over the wall. Fountain resting-places at the sharp angles of the road disclosed the lovely view beneath, the bay, the shell of gold, and

guardian mountains with tiny caps of snow; for it was now November. When the town commenced, a long line of windows with bowed gratings on the upper stories, to which the gentlemen in a preceding carriage kissed their hands, and brought pretty faces forward, showed that it was a favourite convent situation. The church stands a marvel in itself; the mosaic we had thought so wonderful in the small chapel-royal, forms the whole of its large interior; the Bible history, from the moment Eve springs out of Adam's side, is in workmanship so fine, so rich, that though seven centuries have tried to tarnish it with their dust, the monks can scarce find material worthy to repair a breach recent fire has made. By the altar of gold stands a tomb of porphyry, where reposes William the Good, William the Bad lying beneath at Palermo; a throne of white marble awaits the archbishop or king when they ascend to mass; a noble picture of Velasques, opposite one by Monrealese, the great national artist, hangs at the entrance of the cloisters, where, though women may not penetrate, the bronze gates from Pisa standing open showed the beginning of two hundred columns, each of different design. Monreale is one of Italy's wonders. The Benedictine monks, to whom it

belongs, have another fine church and monastery four miles on at San Martino, of which ladies may not even cross the threshold; gentlemen are always welcome, often asked to join the monks at table, hear the organ, and visit the library, where stands the cup from which Socrates drank his poison.

After a stroll through the narrow back streets of Palermo, where the interminable draperies of clothes drying would require an American to "guess" when they were put on; a visit to the markets to hear real screaming, see a variety of new fruits, and the open air kitchens; after a glance at the most curious of fountains, which nearly fills up the senate place, and is too complicated ever to play; an underground peep at a cavern full of the bones of unknown animals; and, if in the summer season, a row to the tunny fisheries at the foot of Monte Pellegrino, whose nets are so strongly sunk, vessels have been known to lose their anchors among their meshes,—after fulfilling these mild duties, courageous travellers will be thinking of making plans for leaving Palermo; if wise, turning a deaf ear to propositions for sending them round the island at a snail's pace on mule-back, with twenty torrents a-day to ford.

Notwithstanding our training in Norway,* we found it pretty hard work getting through the interior by the only two existing post roads, one of which goes west to Trapani, the other east to Messina *viâ* Catania, a distance of two hundred and thirty miles, and recommend all, unless fascinated by what we encountered, to get a government carriage and order for horses, and post over the ground as fast as possible. Those who do not wish to go southward to Girgenti can see a fine specimen of Grecian temple at Segeste, by taking places in the Trapani courier, or driving to Calatafini, a day's journey within three miles of the ruin, which, with its twelve Doric columns, stands majestically crumbling. A thirty-six miles further journey along bridle paths, past Campo-Bello, the ancient quarries whence the classic pillars were hewn before removing, will bring to Selinuntium, whose prostrate remains earthquakes laid level with the grass. But those who have Agrigentum in prospect need sacrifice no time in the temple of a minor deity; *there* are the high altars of the ancient isle.

* "Unprotected Females in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark."

CHAPTER V.

TRAVELLING IN SICILY.

THE CONVEYANCES AND OTHER TRAVELLERS—THE FIRST COUNTRY INN—MONKS, PEASANTS, AND ANIMALS—VILLAGES AND CASINOS—ADVENTURE—GUARDIAN BANDITS—MUSIC OF THE MANDOLINE—A QUARREL—THE MADONNA APPEARS—THE PASHA AND HIS SLAVE.

A VETTURINO, called Antonino, of the Casa Madonna, Strada Toledo, travels weekly between Palermo and Caltanisetta, the chief town of a province half-way to Girgenti. A Sicilian gentleman and his wife had secured two of the places in the carriage, which was new and good, with large glass windows, and drawn by three horses. The postal ourier leaves the passengers at Santa Catarina, rom whence they would be dependent on mules, carts, or walking, for the ten miles to Caltanisetta, to which another post carriage goes direct every Wednesday, travelling all night. Conveyances from the hotel are very expensive; we preferred having other people with us for the first journey through such an unvisited island, and were only

asked six ducats and a half for the two remaining seats in the vetturino. Our companions proved well-bred and agreeable during the whole journey; the gentleman merely smoking as he walked up the hills.

Till fairly inside the carriage, no one believed we would start, as to see ladies travel alone in Sicily is as uncommon as in Norway; the countenance of a native alone could express the dismay at women who "*Girare senza esser accompagnate!!*" ("Travel unaccompanied!!!") that is the sum of horror, an escort being as indispensable as money to an Italian lady unhappy enough to be obliged to travel twenty miles; and a hint at the ascent of Ætna, put them into a fury of "*Impossibile!*" which encouraging expression accompanied us to the foot of the mountain.

A plaited grass basket full of cold chickens, cakes, wine, and little niceties to be had in Palermo, our two waterproof bags, and several warm shawls, were the travelling kit stowed away under the seat; our dresses were of cotton, (strong enough to be constantly washed,) over warm petticoats, and as hats are not comfortable for leaning back in carriages, Mamma had an elastic fancy straw bonnet. From my side hung an infallible defence

against being touched by dirty beggars and children,—a stuffed fox's head, with brilliantly cunning eyes, which also made a pocket for my paints; and as danger signal, a little chamois-foot whistle.

Not starting till mid-day, we reached Belli-frati in the evening, a lone inn upon a height, and were escorted upstairs by a woman, three children, and two dogs. In complete contrast to Norway, where all was wood, here everything was stone; floor, walls, passages; the beds alone were planks raised on iron tressels; ours was the only room possessing a table, which though small, we could but invite the other travellers to share. While they discussed a dish cooked in the house, of veal and maccaroni with a slight seasoning of garlic, we had our cold supper, and were putting by a few tit-bits for the next day, when the coachman came in and said "he hoped we had enough to feed him." The lady and gentleman explained it was the custom for the passengers to provide for the driver's living on the road, and gave him the remainder of their meal; I put money in his hand for wine, promising more each evening, and he went off chuckling; a more good-natured, quiet, driver future travellers could not have. Mattresses and clean sheets soon made

the sleeping boards look less monastic; we passed a tranquil night, instead of not catching a moment's repose, as promised us by those who had not courage to undertake the journey, and which might have proved true in summer: in winter, with the exception of one resting-place, I think nobody would be disturbed on the route we took. As to danger from the people, we were infatuated enough not to think of it; but as all the door locks were out of order, and the ricketty cactus-fibre chairs made but poor barricades, it was a comfort knowing another couple were in the same defenceless state.

At daybreak the goats mustered around the house to be milked, before they went to graze among the rocks till evening; on hearing the sound of their pastor's Pandean-pipe, I opened the shutters, and, but for the infallible balcony, must have fallen on the horns below, as there was no window. The morning air being very sharp, it was impossible to dress in it, so I had last night's classic lamp relighted; it was a beautiful shaped thing, whose design must have come from Etruria, and is universal in Sicily; four wicks branching from a slender stem, which rests upon a bowl constantly replenished with olive oil; altogether not unlike

the women's terra-cotta pitchers, which borne upon the head, over a semi-veil of wool in winter, muslin in summer, obliges them to look graceful.

Before starting, coffee in doll's cups, with minute spoons, was brought up; the charge for it was one tari, for each bed two tari, and with a present to the ragged maid-servant, made exactly the amount the other travellers paid, minus their supper, which was three tari; that added gives a fair idea of expenses in the interior of Sicily, which are not much more extravagant than in Norway.

The peasants came out prepared for bitter cold, clad from head to foot in shaggy sheep-skin, which made us ask them "if they had been banished to Siberia?" but after a few hours the penetrating mistral wind became almost benumbing inside the carriage, and our woollens were all required for snugness. Those who had not put on their most winterly garb were in the brown cloak with pointed hood, called "caputto;" a most comfortable garment which keeps the wind from the neck and ears, and as such has long been discovered by monks and friars, whom it makes its wearers resemble; but one glance at the features beneath the hood dispels the deception,—they are not round and rosy, but scorched and haggard, with a brilliantly expressive pair of

black eyes, speaking sympathetically or not, according to the meaning in your own. Our roast-beef word "jolly" can be applied to no one in Sicily who has not on the clerical garb; its wearers only are rubicund and stout, and numbering more than 18,000, do not find their possessions, spreading over upwards of a quarter of the island, more than enough to support them comfortably. Knowing this, the traveller should watch some day the fisherman as he lands with his nets: the monks are in waiting with ropes round their waists; they do not unknot them and help to pull the burden ashore, but waving them above in form of benediction and payment proceed to point out the finest fish to the servitors of their monastery, letting the favoured fisherman carry the remainder to market, sure of speedy sale for articles so blest. Are grapes or melons scarce? the gardener is hurrying home with a small basketful for his young family; he meets a friar, who makes the sign of the cross over it and puts the ripest in his paunch. The man makes the sacrifice unmurmuringly; but the sight of honest labour so hardly taxed diminished the feeling of romance with which we contemplated the distribution of charity at convent-doors, as it was merely the people's right returned to them for begging,

instead of circulating naturally, while it increased the power and influence of the restorers, whose church is the only institution which flourishes. The animals share the universal leanness; striped bull-dogs large as Cerberus, and which seem the pet race of the island, hanging their desponding heads and tails at the extremities of bodies unequal to the weight; oxen, whose monstrous horns are the only antidotes to the charm of the "jettatura," or evil eye (and as such nailed up in all orthodox court-yards), gracefully bear their own hides on rows of starting ribs, like hoops of crinoline: the horses and mules, though trimmed with ribbons, bells, mirrors, pictures, and feathers, as if they had just been tarred, showed through their finery, like their owners, the leanness of their souls. Cruelty to animals seems unchecked by any authority; donkeys with clipped ears, and birds with eyes put out, to sharpen their pipes, are usual sights. A small mule was made to gallop up hill, drawing three men, by the side of the carriage; the "carette," or painted carts, were racing all along the road; and just as I was commencing to sketch one of the Japanese-looking concerns, with the thousand little figures on yellow ground, the picturesque driver (who, having forgotten his "caputto," was in pink hand-

kerchief, white jacket, and black leggings), the harness, of high pyramid with bells and portrait of the Madonna,—some horrid red gashes on the horse turned me against the whole concern. Not an ungalled animal past; a leathern belt across their chests acting as carving-knife if their load were weighty. Ill-treatment of animals is not peculiar to this island, though carried to a great extent, the whole of Italy being guilty of the same crime.

The sun lighted up the face of the treeless country, which is undulating, and owes all its beauty to colouring; the land had a barren appearance, but cannot be really so, as it is the same which supplied the granaries of Rome before the art of irrigation was neglected: thrashing Indian corn with soft flails, pressing olives in baskets, and killing oxen by the roadside, were the only rural occupations: villages without a chimney among them lay on the sides of the hills like blocks of stone waiting to be carted away; here and there a "casino," or gentleman's country-house, rose one story from the ground and displayed its unglazed casements: fresco-painting had ceased: the villages were little Bagarias,* with the inhabitants at their most various vocations on the road, making each

* Near Palermo.

place look as the native one of the saying, "turning the house out of doors." The frontages of iron bars, festooned by maccaroni, or "paste," and pigs running out of each house, showed the favourite eatables. At the mid-day rest the dishes of the former which were finished by our fellow-travellers, and refilled for the coachman and luggage-guarding boy, might have made a Neapolitan wonder why they nicknamed his countrymen "Mangiar-maccaroni."

An enormous coach, like an English stage, with six horses, galloped up to the post-house while we were waiting. Two gentlemen got out, and the first immediately exclaimed, "I am sure those must be English ladies! one finds them alone at Jerusalem!" He advanced and entered into pleasant conversation with us; and finding, as he had guessed, we were on the way to Girgenti, asked "if we had any introductions?" A negative answer seemed really to surprise him. "I will give you a useful one," he said; "Secretary, write to Don Angelo." The other gentleman wrote a letter, which Count Tasca signed, and then drove off in the carriage built on purpose to take his family backwards and forwards without stopping. His daughter spoke English well; and I may mention

his name and history as being an honour to his country. The Count's father was a wealthy peasant, who gave his son an excellent education and sent him to travel. Upon his return and succeeding to his lands, he devoted himself to the study of the higher branches of agriculture with such success the grateful soil yielded him an immense fortune; while his superiority of manner and education made him welcome in society, and united him to a prince's daughter. His increasing possessions brought him the title attached to the land: without national prejudices, he still superintends their management under an English farmer; and those who know the disadvantages and temptations to dribble away time Sicilians have to combat, will allow him all the credit of genius. A little passing circumstance gave an insight into his management;—the only plump, unscared, mules we saw during the journey were carrying his grain.

This pleasant adventure made up for the backwardness of the few English at Palermo, and was the source of a great deal of future characteristic amusement. On preparing to re-enter the carriage, a smart military-looking man with long hair and top-boots, politely touched his hat, and said he was ordered to escort the ladies through the country—

"Was there danger? . . . . . and who ordered him?"

"There was no danger, but the Count, with whom he had arrived, wished us to have a guard of honour as a small mark of attention on his part, and a simliar relieving one would be found waiting at each station; his Excellency must be obeyed."

So, whether we would or not, we were under the care of the celebrated *Compagni d'armi*, first-rate fellows who have all been brigands, enlisted by a master-stroke of the government in its service. Splendid pay, complete forgiveness, and a precedence to the military, were the bribes: they took, and brigandage was eradicated. Now the traveller is much more secure from violence than in England, the *Compagni* being responsible for all robberies, which are made good from their pay: but as they themselves were the thieves, there are no claimants; save when some foolish amateur tries an experiment, and is tracked and hooked up with an acuteness which shows how wise it is "to set a thief to catch a thief." One would suspect the loyalty of such professionals; but a Sicilian respects his oath. Make one seriously pledge his word of honour, and you may trust him; it is not the *parole d'honneur* of the French.

Our night's resting-place at Valla-lunga was much like the preceding one, save that the sounds of the *mandoline*, or Sicilian guitar, came from an apartment at the other end of the passage. Two velvet-clad gentlemen were sitting with the host and his family over a *bracciera*, singing the sorrows of a pretty nun. They perceived our interest, and in the most courteous manner, after seating us and falling into the back-ground, offered to sing a still more melancholy air; one of their countryman Bellini's.

"You could not choose better," we answered; and they commenced:—

"Did you see that fair young face change, fade, die? . . . yet Donna Lauretta was brilliant as the Persian rose but an hour ago. She was betrothed to Don Sylvestro, who, generous and noble, had made her guileless heart for ever his own. 'I will away to the town,' said he, 'to prepare my ducal halls for her who is to enchant and order there.' She followed with her princely parents, and rested on the balcony to gaze by moonlight on the town which held her lover. . . He would be at her side when the messenger had announced her coming. . . . . Torches are flashing through the street—long trains of chanting

priests creepingly approach—the glare, the incense flares, rolls up to her windows—a catafalque shapes ghastly through the fumes—a body lays on it—whose? ay, whose? . . Laura, maniac, replies—"

The last chords of the mandoline had hardly struck, when a fearful noise of human rage filled the house, and the host was found to have slipped away unperceived. We flew to our room, trembling midst this crashing storm of boiling southern blood. Some one knocked at the door, and silence bespeaking our terror, they said, "We are friends." It was the voice of the gentlemen who had been singing,—come to reassure us. A quarrel was going on in the posada below, but without danger to us; they then wished "Felice notte" (happy night) saying we should not want protectors, come what might; and chose a most delicate way of calming us by walking up and down the passage singing soft tunes to the mandoline, which, as the fury below wore itself away, soothed us soon to sleep. They were civil engineers, sent to superintend some constructions in the neighbourhood, and conversed most intelligently.

This scene let us know what "a passion" in Sicily really was; and next morning we heard one of the excited exclaiming, "O, had I had but a

knife at hand!" Though the use of fire-arms is nominally prohibited, nearly every one who passed carried a gun; the gentry never move without; a young man who took a drive of ten miles with us had his sword-stick.

Our day's journey lay among the Neptunian mountains, whose sides yield alabaster; here and there a clear block lay by the road-side, the niches filled with bright blue irises, culling which beguiled the long ascents. At Santa Catarina was the dinner halt, which meal we eat inside the carriage; then, having heard the place was more than a village, we tried to walk through its mud and find out something new. A crowd gradually collected and followed in our train; we sought sanctuary in the church, they invaded its precincts to contemplate us with a devout attention which was incomprehensibly edifying, till a loud whisper to a new comer said, "Chut! Sarà la Santa Madonna!" Not liking to smile irreverently, we went out; and seeing the door of a superior house open, walked up the outer stairs, and asked permission of a circle of spinning women to rest in the ante-room. They bore the sudden apparition very pleasantly; but could not be prevented calling the proprietor of the house, though we wished to be quiet. He appeared

clad in a green velvet dressing-gown and red cap, a complete Pasha, followed by a nice-looking female-slave in torn petticoats and handkerchief. They offered coffee, fruit, anything we liked: and made us rest in the best room on velvet sofas, the door ajar showing the adjoining one was in the posada style. After having conversed pleasantly with the gentleman, who being a Sicilian, that is, innately polished, did not fatigue us with the string of questions always put by the well-meaning Norwegians, we rose to go; and wishing to give the servants a trifle, placed it in the hand of one of the spinners, not liking to give it to the slave in his presence. We saw him again on the road, driving a beautiful carriage and pair, with a little boy and smiling lady by his side; *that ragged girl was his wife!*

CHAPTER VI.

A PROVINCIAL TOWN.

DIFFICULTIES AND DESPAIR — REVIVAL AND SALVATION — A HERO APPEARS — MORE ROMANCE — STYLE OF PLACE — THE CLUBS — EXILES — JEALOUSY — ARRANGEMENTS OF A COURIER FOR HIS VICTIMS—CURIOUS PEASANTRY—TWENTY-FOUR O'CLOCK.

CALTANISETTA was now but ten miles distant, and reached at dusk. The coachman found us a nice apartment in a house called "Il Giardino verde" (the green garden), near the large piazza. Our truly good-natured travelling companions continued the journey to their native town on mules, the road ceasing here; that large section of country to the south-east being left to the mercy of bridle paths.

All our provisions were exhausted; and being much fatigued, I gave the old servant of the house some money to buy eggs, or any thing she could get. After awaiting her a tedious time, she returned, not with something eatable, but with a long harangue in the most speaking Sicilian, of which I could only make out, "that there was nothing to be got." The shops being now shut, it

was no use hunting for ourselves; the whole house, and numbers of people from without, were standing in the passage to get a peep whenever our door was opened; men were asking for the passport; everybody was in a state of tittering excitement at the arrival of "due donne sole." We were quite exhausted, and, with the piastres in our pockets, felt as the imaginary Frenchman must, when, after the socialist plan of dividing property equally, had given everybody twenty-five francs a-day, he went to the baker's, and was told he made bread no longer, as he was provided for; "What am I to eat, then?" "Why your twenty-five francs a-day." We were thoroughly desolate; and had the floor been of marble instead of brick, I should have fainted away, indeed, was just thinking of waving that objection, when my hand felt something besides silver in my pocket—it was Count Tasca's letter!!

This reviving discovery was so animating, it gave us courage to take a guide that we might see it delivered ourselves; such a saving document was too precious to run the risk of being peeped into and criticised by the congregation outside.

Don Angelo's house was close at hand, but he had just left it for a journey.

"Then we must return to Palermo," was our murmur of sulky despair, and were passing out of his door, when a gentleman who had been leaving a card stepped forward and said, "Ladies, I am one of Don Angelo's intimate friends, and shall only be too glad to replace him in your service;" then presenting a young man who was with him, he added, "this is my brother, who being married, can answer for his wife assisting the ladies in any feminine advice they may require."

They offered their arms; we felt saved; a long line of pointed hoods glided after us in the misty distance. Surely it was a scene of olden drama; on reaching the door we asked our gallant friend's name, it was—Don Giovanni!

Arrived up-stairs, we found the table spread with a cold supper; this was so magical I felt afraid the statue of the "Commandante" would be walking in to share the meal, when Don Giovanni, who arrived a few moments after, reminded me of his slipping into a "caffè" in the midst of my recounting our Caltanisetta difficulties, and confessed to having brought us home by a longer way, to give time to provide some comforts. How delightful to see something of Sicilian character in this way, and come in for a little bit of romance still!

As we were not allowed to pay for the meal when the boy came to clear away, we privately ordered the same for the next day on our own account: it was punctually brought, with plates, glasses, linen, and all accessaries. Travellers will find ordering their coffee for breakfast to be sent in saves a great deal of time, as it is never prepared in the house, and the people much prefer standing about, looking on, to running quickly with a message.

The next morning, almost before daylight, the young barons came to know our plans for the day. We were obliged to tell them through the keyhole to return in a couple of hours. We then set out to explore the place, which, though a "Capo di Provincia" (capital of a province), with twelve thousand inhabitants, seemed nothing more than the head-quarters of its wretchedness; as if the various unpaved villages had been joined together, with here and there a handsome building that had known better days. The site, that of ancient Gela, is charming; on the summit of a hill, in the centre of an amphitheatrical circle of others, it looks cheerfully to all points, but also suffers from cold in winter, and is called the "Piccola Siberia" (little Siberia). Ætna stands piled with snow in the

distance. The "Villa," or garden for breathing the evening air, is an indispensable retreat to every town, and here, as at Palermo, the only spot where it is "the thing" for ladies to walk; that means, one slow turn and back to their carriage. The Sicilians seeming to exist without exercise, and as for going out, even in this small town, "senza esser accompagnate" (without being accompanied)! as they never do so, there are no words to express the horrible impropriety of the proceeding. The casinos on the hills around, looked very pretty at a distance; one, Don Giovanni had luckily inherited with his title and fortune from an uncle, as his brother was the elder son, and would possess his father's vast sulphur mines, of which we met some of the produce coming from a great distance in mule-panniers.

After dinner, which they vividly reproached us with having surreptitiously ordered, only leaving them scope to furnish the dessert, oranges and sweet lemons, they escorted us to the "Casino dei Nobili" (club for the upper classes), where were assembled a number of young Sicilians, unexceptionable in appearance, but smoking and spitting on the marble floor at a rate which would prevent anything like the permanent smiles of an English

lady lighting on them. On turning up our noses slightly, the cigars were sacrificed to the movement. Several of the gentlemen played and sang national songs to the piano, a forbidden employment, and asked to be introduced as a reward. One spoke English, and having taken part in the last revolution, had been but lately let out of prison, where his dictionary and English books were the first things he was deprived of. Being a man of talent, he was not allowed to exercise his profession in the town where he was formerly established, "of which the very water in the streets was liberal," but sent to an isolated inland place, where he could do nothing—nothing. The inaction was weighing him down to brooding madness—there are thousands exiled in a like manner to the dull spots of the island; this was but one instance of that cruel oppression, "residenza sforzata" (forced residence).

Ten miles from Caltanisetta is a large saracenic bridge, called Capo d'Arso, forming one of the triple national wonders: un Fonte (the lake at Lentini), un Ponte (that bridge), un Monte (Ætna). We contented ourselves with imagining its vast arch; as the gentlemen had engaged the coachman and carriage from Palermo, to take us the next

morning to Girgenti, whence the road has just been completed as a private undertaking. They came in the evening to say good-bye for the present. A gentleman from the casino, who had taught himself English, had also looked in, saying it was such an inexpressible pleasure to be able to speak a few words of it. Don Giovanni did not seem particularly well pleased with his superior knowledge, and when I made him a present of the *Times* newspaper to study, looked very uncomfortable, which the other seemed to enjoy; they were getting more jealous of each other every moment, till our presence alone restrained an explosion, which commenced in earnest the moment they got into the passage together; when, oh, most fortunate! I saw the Supplement still remained—rushed after them, put it triumphantly into Don Giovanni's hand—the other was immediately extended to his fancied rival.

Next morning at five o'clock, a basket with a fat cold chicken, delicious bread, "ricotta," or baked cream which replaces butter, roasted almonds, and fried figs, all of our own providing, were put into the comfortable carriage; and none of the young men having been able to get passports, (without which no one can travel into another

province, so fortunately cannot follow anybody,) we drove off alone, having vainly tried to arrange with a lady and gentleman bound for Girgenti to set off together; but being in the hands of a courier they were not free agents, and though they had come from that not very neighbouring country, Sweden, on purpose to see the antiquities of the isle, we heard afterwards he had taken them back straight from Caltanisetta to Palermo. The "Aquila Nera," where they lodged, is considered the best house for travellers; we liked the interior of ours better; despite the assurances of a man and woman in the kitchen-entrance that they could cook us anything, we much preferred ordering meals in, and not seeing who prepared them.

The excellent road of fifty miles was barricaded by a chain and a toll every ten miles. The coachman paid the tari of his own accord; he was to reach Girgenti that evening, stay a day there, return the following one, and to receive five "ouncie," or twelve "pezzi" and a half, which was thought a good sum, but was to look after his own provisions. The price of a carriage to Girgenti only, is seven pezzi; about once a month the Palermo steamer takes back and brings passengers; those who arrive by her could follow our road reversed.

At Cannicatti the market had assembled multitudes of peasants. The men were a fine looking set, minus their leanness; among the women one never expects to see any beauty after the age of fifteen, and the number of elderly Medusas is so great as to expose the gazer to a real danger of turning to stone; our feet were often suspiciously cold. Instead of being driven into a courtyard, as in other places, the carriage was left outside the inn, so that we were surrounded by a crowd of interested spectators, who went into fits of excitement when we began to eat the contents of our basket. The grown-up portions of the crowd were well-bred in keeping their distance; but the children and beggars, (of which latter there are few inland,) shared the steps and coachbox between them, obliging us to pin up our shawls as curtains. This manœuvre displeased everybody; and the poor things having but little amusement, we went afterwards to sit on one of the balconies, royalty fashion, only with the fox's head in the foreground to bear the brunt of the staring, which continued steadily for a whole hour, to the complete cessation of commerce.

Girgenti was reached at the Ave Maria, that is sunset, the moment from which the hours are

reckoned up to twenty-four o'clock. As the starting period changes every evening, and very few Sicilians have John Bull's punctuality, or a good view of the sinking sun, the watches are not all set at the same moment, and the church clocks do not even agree. I was quizzing a good-natured native about this system one day; he replied, "Of course it would not answer in a country like yours, where one never sees the sun!"

T. Picken, lith. Routledge, Warnes & Routledge, London & New York. Day & Son, Chromolith. to the Queen

CHAPTER VII.

ANCIENT AGRIGENTUM.

At ancient Agrigentum two temples stand, raised on the rocks from whence they were hewn, their roofless columns clear against the African sky; beautiful in ruin as their foundations are majestic. The other glories of the city lie prostrate, save where a few tottering cornices hesitate to follow their sister-stones of frailer tracery.

Concord! thy temple has outstood them all, and triumphs in the strength of simple unity. Of finest Grecian mould, its double row of pillars, perfect frontage, flights of steps, enchanting grace, can be seen in the mind's eye of those who poetically unroof the modern Madeleine, soften every stone, place it on slopes of tenderest verdure, clinging to a rock which stands in ocean, then fall down and worship the loveliness of ancient art, whose site is Nature's grandeur.

On the next rock rises Juno's fane; her pillars more unequal, her steps more tottering, but still standing in irregular beauty; now in the fresh morning, when each plant and evergreen is sending forth its sweetest scent, the goddess's shrine wants not for incense more than on the day that the charms of the five fairest of Agrigentum's females, portrayed in colour, and united into one form, tried to look as—Juno.

These temples were placed outside the town, which was encircled by the rocks, at once defenders of the living and dead, for their hollowed sides gave sacred resting-places to those whose fight of life was over. The vicissitudes of war and peace, proud prosperity, and most miserable despoiling, which Agrigentum felt, are told in history,—of her tyrants will ever live in childish memory that one, Phalaris, whose only act of justice was throwing into the hollow brazen bull, seated on hidden fire, the inventor of the torture-animal, which roared lustily with the cries of its first victim.

Three pillars of delicate form and moderate height, midst fallen vestiges of similar kind, are the remains of the temple of the starry twins, Castor and Pollux; in the distance stands one pillar belonging to the old planet Saturn; the furrows of

the plough encircle them all, and thriving trees make up by fruitfulness for their decay. On the other hand lie the giants in the sward, the images of Agrigentum's conquered foes, shaped into Cariatide, who bore on bending arms the frontage of a temple so vast, one capital alone was what Hercules would have tried his strength to hurl, and thus has given his name to the huge masses which his arm could alone replace in symmetry around the one lone pillar of his temple. There they lie, the innocent butterfly and bee playing hide and seek among the audacious shrubs which try to soften their monstrous reality; and the dust of their rearers scattered—the placid blue sky above can alone tell where.

Such are the remains which speak for themselves, Concord, Juno, Castor and Pollux, Giants, Hercules. Innumerable fragments, the ruins of ruins, will be pointed out by a modest cicerone, who had seen but three bands of rovers during the year. A tomb, of either Theron or his horse; some stones of the altar of the god of medicine; others of Jupiter, Ceres, Apollo, are good for antiquarians' research; we, contemplating the standing monarchs, walked in and out of their portals, dreamt on their steps, strained for one glimpse of

the coast of Barbary, whose pirates but forty years ago made it perilous for a maiden to wander on the shore below; lived in imagination midst the throng around these altars, where classic garments swept grace in every fold; breathed May's enchanted air in December's bosom; joined in soft whisper with the wave as she fell in faint "good night" upon the shore; dared to glow with the elements as, touched by the sinking sun,—air, earth, and water responded with one deep blush. O God! while by thy goodness we kneel here, refined through every pore by the loveliness of thine own world, ancient ages in stupendous drama rising, our feelings too deep for mortal expression—are there beings of like passions shut in damp walls, grinding in ceaseless toil, absorbed in trivial vanity, or walking in hideous crime and vice? Let at least our poor, poor gratitude reach thy throne, and our rejoicing be with humble trembling.

A lettiga, such as Julia used, bore us away.

CHAPTER VIII.

MODERN GIRGENTI AND SULPHUR MINES.

LIVELINESS OF AFRICA'S NEIGHBOURS—A LETTIGA—DESCENT INTO A SULPHUR MINE—THE CATHEDRAL—CHANGE IN THE TOWN SINCE BYRON'S DAYS—THE TEMPLES AT NIGHT—VOLCANO OF MUD—SOMETHING ABOUT A PRIEST.

Don Artemisio and Don Pasquale, introduced by letters from our Caltanisetta friends, came with the dawn to reply in person, offering homage and services, and commencing them by sending in a delicious tribute of fish for breakfast, ready cooked. The Sicilians seem to rise as early as the Norwegians, for get up when we might, they were always beforehand with us, and had to be sent about something useful for several hours.

Never lived there two more lively young men than this pair of Dons; every feature in their face spoke, and echoed their animated speeches and national peculiarities; after the first question of rigorous politeness, "quanto tempo che *girate?*"* they launched out—did we criticise "Ha! we were the geniuses of the *forbice*, or cissors:" did we

* Literally, "turning about."

sneeze, they rose and said, "*Felicita, felicita:*"* expressed "no," by tossing up their heads: "what," by shaking them: "friendship," by laying two first fingers together: "enmity," by placing the same crossways: "despair," by devoutly crossing themselves: and "astonishment," by arching first one eyebrow then another.

They wished to, and did send us donkeys with side-saddles to trot to the ruins, three miles off; but I was determined to ride for once as an ancient matron, and this was the moment. A perfect lettiga, beautifully painted, was found, with mules so plump, they must have fed surreptitiously in one of those caves near the harbour, which, hermetically sealed, keep the merchants' corn dry for years. The construction of the vehicle was like the body of a *vis-à-vis* raised on two horizontal poles, a peasant and his son, in long caps, held a bar of wood on which we stepped and sprung through the narrow door; the mules, harnessed between the poles, were covered with trappings like war-horses, and if their bells were not of silver, they tingled as such in our ears. Thus rode the ancients, thus ride the moderns in Sicily, particularly ladies when they journey: pleasant enough is the movement when

* Happiness, happiness.

one is wrapped in dreams of classic beauty; but so to pace round the island at the rate, at the most, of eighteen miles a day, through a country whose rains are inundations, whose beauty is that of colouring, and luxuriousness that of the desert, with here and there an oasis of fan palms and aloes; whose caravanseries task every grain of one's fortitude, and neglected people one's sympathy and pity, if not disgust—to pace through this state of things for three weeks, and be at the mercy of even the best of guides, is a proposition to which the traveller must tightly close his ears when hinted to him, as it was to us, at Palermo.

Our departure from Girgenti must be delayed to see a sulphur mine, and the young men have introduced the stoutest Don Cesare as the proprietor of one near the town, that his portly presence may completely dispel any idea of ill effects to the complexion, or health, from descending a few hundred yards into volcanic earth. A nice phaeton and pair fit for Hyde-park comes to the door, takes us up, and drives past the only neat house in the place, the English Vice-Consul's, opposite the public garden guarded by particularly grim sphinxes, down a long hill, upon the summit of which Girgenti is delightfully exposed to every ray of the tropical

sun, to a collection of rubbish-mounds, whose fellows dot about the face of the country. Each belongs to separate proprietors: Don Cesare's chief "Cyclopses," as the miners are called from the lamps on their foreheads, come to receive him with pick-axes in hand, and light a blazing torch. After a little hesitation, just to try the style of Sicilian powers of persuasion, we let ourselves be escorted downwards, first taking off our best shawls and veils, but declining proffered wrappers, the prudent proceeding in southern countries, merely tying our handkerchiefs tightly round our throats, the part the cold air always attacks in a cuttingly beheading manner.

Two cyclopses go before, a train follow, all one by one, and were it not for the arching earth overhead the narrow path would resemble one down a hill side of some hundred feet in height.

At length an obstruction — Quick! forward! One of the men advances with his axe, knocks away, and shows how the excavations are extended; the falling earth is carried up in wheelbarrows, and made into the mounds, in the centre of which a fire is lighted, and after smouldering three weeks, a little golden stream begins to pour out from the base; wooden tanks of about two feet square are

placed to receive it, it hardens in their form, and makes those compact lakes of sulphur which carts and mules are carrying all over the country, and of which Girgenti is the chief collecting point for embarkation; consequently, the mines around are the most valuable for situation, but the quality of the produce cannot be ascertained till the burning process has decided it. Don Cesare cleared £400 per annum by his, having bought it for a trifle on speculation, and though the profit would not be thought worth the trouble of mining for in England, here the process is simple, and that moderate income can purchase every luxury of life. The best quality of sulphur, which is brilliantly yellow, is worth one ducat a square, and its ashes, after the extraction, called "*Gesso*," are again made useful as outer coverings to the burning mounds. These mines are almost the only speculations Sicilians embark in, sometimes investing £60,000 at one throw, winning or losing proportionately. Few have the idea of personal superintendence, but when they do give their attention to the subject, they show an aptitude of comprehension which would make its way in any scientific or commercial undertaking; unfortunately the produce of sulphur is greater than the demand in the outer world at

present, so that whole territories are unworked; in fact the island is principally constructed of it, mixed with other volcanic materials, and were it not for the vent in Ætna, the inhabitants say "they should have been blown off in spontaneous combustion long ago."

Returning from the mines we were all put down at the entrance to the "Purgatorio," giving one rather too much sulphur and brimstone, and from thence walked up to the Cathedral San Biaggio, said to be part of the temple of Proserpine, and to contain a picture by Guido. A fine echo creeps along the walls, and replies to raised voices from the other end; an ancient sculptured sarcophagus is used as a font; a wooden infant stands on an altar, attired in a sky-blue satin hat and feather, white muslin frock, sash, and nosegay. The streets of Girgenti are very steep, and stones viciously sharp, though mud tries hard to fill up their angles. The rooms of the "Conversazione dei Nobili" were full of young men sipping coffee and rosoglio, a sweet liqueur; but the subject of the temples once exhausted, what can they find to converse about?

The inn, Bella Napoli, possesses one or two notions how things ought to be, such as laying a table-cloth and the salt for dinner, but our most uncomfortable

night was passed in it; besides other annoyances the mosquitoes came in at the window unguardedly left open after the lamp was lighted. As hot Africa is the next country, one must make some allowances for the Sahara state of things, and remember the sultry climate has preserved those Temples to thrill with delight the refined and classic. We were not overcharged either for accommodation or provisions, but this is the inn where some travellers who followed, and declined decreasing their dignity by making arrangements beforehand, were detained half a day haggling for a very serious sum; the landlord does not interfere, and a knot of cunning servants have the management of people, so it is as well to know there is another house called "*l'Oliva*," the Olive, of about the same standing. The lively Dons boasted of their town's improvement since Byron's day, who "stood at the one window, in the one inn, in the one street."

We were truly sorry at parting with these kind friends, without the slightest chance of seeing them again, "*che nel cielo*" (except in heaven), as they said, and for once regretted having nothing but little bags for luggage, which could not hold the two magnificent specimens of sulphur crystallizations, large as Don Cesare, and which he sent as

remembrances of the mine on the shoulders of two cyclops. The last few spare minutes we peeped in at an old Antiquary's, who paints cupids, and had some awfully valuable cameos;—then gave one distant look by moonlight at the ruined glories standing in calm melancholy beneath the flight of time, who, touched to the heart, folds one wing as he sweeps across them, lest his ruthless rushing should bring annihilation . . . . . Farewell, grand calmness . . . . . we must be back to the other end of Europe!

Storm held the skies all the next day with valiant roar of thunder, hail, and rain; the great mal-aria plain seemed to enjoy the sensation; its peasants were collected in the towns of San Catajo and Serra di Falco, playing cards in the caffés, as the Palermo fishermen do on the Marina, and coming out in the few intervals of lurid light to fill the piazzas with groups of cloaked and hooded figures. Away we dashed! there was no time to combine to assassinate us for stakes; besides, the captain of the "Compagni d'armi" was in a carriage immediately in front, with one of his worthy band upon the box unfurling a vast umbrella, and I have seldom had a more reassuring prospect than that dripping red sail-like construction in front during

those fifty miles of sulky, sloppy country, through a road which seemed to have been just covered with mud pies from the neighbouring volcano Macaluba,* whose eruptions produce only streams of that interesting element.

Don Giovanni and his brother hailed our arrival, which no one else had expected, and I found out they had secured the apartments on their own responsibility. Kind creatures! how they enjoyed being hospitable in their country's way, which is to make the traveller welcome, I cannot say comfortable, in his own quarters; few, few, private establishments being fit to receive a visitor. Next morning we were to drive to Santa Catarina, and meet the Government courier, so were rather fidgety to be up and off early. The gentlemen considerately kept away, leaving word they would come with the carriage; but a priest in full dress, who represented himself as a friend of theirs, thus commanding our civility, insisted on paying us a visit in the midst of the confusion. He watched us eating our breakfast, would help to carry down the things, and followed me to the goldsmith's, where, as napoleons are unknown in interior Sicily, they were bought by

* From a Saracenic word, meaning "upside down."

weight at two-thirds of their value. He eyed the gold in a basilical manner, begged me to give him a piece, "as he had never seen one before;" would not be bolted out at my return, but knelt down on the ground to lace my boots—I almost wish I had kicked him, for the moment my back was turned three piastres were slipped out of the bag! I looked again—he had sneaked off, and to our astonishment we found the gentlemen only knew him by sight as officiating at one of the churches! There was no time to be lost, so we said nothing to them of the theft till we were fairly off; they were disgusted, but not so astonished as one would fancy; and afterwards, when I have mentioned the occurrence to priests of the upper classes, they have generally answered, "But there are such miserable creatures in our lower orders," or else, "All kinds enter the Church now-a-days." The traveller will generally find a priest or two hovering about the passages, seeing what he can pick up, and one is always waiting at the door with a money-box covered with figures consuming in flames. Though the whole tribe are unpopular with the male population, who hardly ever refer to them without a sneer, and the poor without a hiss of horror or expression sounding

very like "assassini," yet they have influence with the women; indeed Don Giovanni told us confidentially "his mother was miserable at his acquaintance with us, because we were Protestants!" a confession particularly apropos after the last little scene.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CENTRE OF THE ISLAND.

PROBATIONARY HOURS—STYLE OF THE GOVERNMENT CONVEYANCES —PROSERPINE'S CAVERN—THE PUBLIC CORRESPONDENCE—FIRST COMPLETE VIEW OF ÆTNA.

AFTER one hour's waiting in mud and suspense in Santa Catarina, guarded, to keep the crowd off, by a "Compagno d'armi," whose captain was Don Giovanni's brother-in-law, and another hour passed beneath some olive-trees, whose shade partially protected us from the scorching rays of the mid-day sun, while a wall made a semi-barrier from the inhabitants of the town (who had immediately emigrated after us), by merely allowing their eyes to peer above it, where they glared like a row of red-hot coals, our probation was brought to a conclusion by the "Corriere Reale" (royal courier) rolling up. Though formerly anxious to know what kind of vehicle it was, coming at that moment as a happy deliverer from a severe penance, we were not much inclined to criticise its appearance, and would have been glad to go off with a

witch on her broomstick. It was not until we were told, with two other passengers, to get into an old-fashioned yellow coach, apparently already filled by a great he-witch or wizard in uniform and several tiers of cloaks, we murmured so much at the seedy appearance of things, that the poor Don, who had been our patient champion and attendant throughout, said sorrowfully, "*Ha! la Signora Donna Emilia non pensa che al legno; Io, che al dispiacer de separarmi di lei.*"* This recalled us to good humour; and perceiving a nice seat on the box of the vehicle, the day being so fine, we mounted there, with a promise of the two inside places, which the other passengers would vacate on arriving at their destination by nightfall.

Then off the old coach galloped, drawn by six good horses ridden by two picturesque postilions in red and black, preceded by a "Compagno d'armi," and bearing outside two English ladies, a greater novelty to the natives than any they could show us, and which, told in Caltanisetta, would produce the most "shocking sensation." Cannot you fancy Don Giovanni's mother throwing her eyes up to the ceiling of her unfurnished apartments, as she

* "Ah! Donna Emilia is only thinking of the conveyance, while I am taken up by the regret I feel at parting."

recited the event to a choice female circle, seated round a basin of charcoal, and heads wrapped in old handkerchiefs?

When on the post-road in Sicily the traveller need not be anxious about finding room in the post-carriage; the officials do not at all mind overfilling it, either inside or out; and after being voluntarily offered a seat on the parcels of any of the passengers, will be thought generous if he pay full fare for a place on the roof, always remembering that to get off anyhow, even by hanging on behind, is better than to be left at a Sicilian village, where to attempt to fraternise with the peasants, as in rural countries, is madness. Pastoral life in the south has around it an armour of dirt, impenetrable to an Englishman. Don Giovanni watched us out of sight, after, good soul! having tried to bribe the fat old "Corriere" to sit outside instead of us, not imagining we could do so from choice; and soon, despite the sun's ardent rays, we began to feel a small, sharp, invisible wind, cutting like a tiny penknife through and through us, taking every shawl and fold of woollen we possessed to foil its attacks, as like an eastern scimiter through muslin, it divided them all, and towards evening would have completely cut us up, had not the wizard

handed out one of his enormous cloaks, with hood, whose toughness completely set it at defiance. This explained the riddle, when at starting, in the middle of the heat, a peasant on the road, who wished to mount the roof, was completely checked by the postilion exclaiming, "*Senza capputto?*" The gentry never move without these protecting mantles, made of finer cloth but same form as the labourers'.

This was the high road towards the great sulphur country. Crowds of mules, each with his yellow lading, were pressing along, falling into file to make way for the carriage; carts followed brimful of the golden riches, the way powdered by their overflow. All appeared radiant prosperity, till a conglomeration of vehicles, which it seemed impossible to disengage from each other, obliged us to stop, and in looking beyond the crowds, we saw a broad river was flowing betwixt them, and a similar collection of mules and carts on the opposite banks—there was no bridge to connect the two. Written pages might strive to tell of the wrongs of Sicily; that unbridged river bears a thousand silently along. Here in the midst of her Californian mines—on her one post road—were her riches, horses, men, battling in inglorious struggle

as they rolled down the deep banks of the river—gasped for life in the stream—panted, by the aid of each other, up the opposite shore—horses and men returning through the flood to aid their striving companions; consuming their forces, gashing their animals, wasting their labour! After an hour's way-making, a scene of violence and pain, we passed through them to the river's edge; sank with a sudden plunge over the wheels into rushing waters; by continual whipping and striking were forced through them and dragged up a sandy bank, whose heavings alone prevented the cumbrous carriage from rolling back into the flood, and where the whole scene of the opposite shore was repeated to fray it a passage—most odious, dangerous transaction. Yet we were fortunate so to pass through it. The least rain swells the river to a torrent—only the day before, the Messina post had waited seven hours upon the banks, and a private carriage, the entire night. Heavy rain covers the banks with an encampment of waiting people, as there is no inn or accommodation of any kind, and travellers must sleep in their conveyances. Villa Rosa is the soft name of this harsh spot; and if you ask "Why none of the blocks of stone around are hewn into a bridge?" the people will

say, "Ah, why?" A proprietor of one of the largest mines offered to pay the Government for the permission to do so at his expense, levying a small toll for ten years only, and was refused. "Ah, why?" again say they, and who can tell them?

With this exception the way was excellent, winding in and out at the foot of hills of beautiful shape, whose bareness was clothed by brilliant reflections of the sun's rays, and vacuums among them filled by views of their more distant companions opening in rocky avenue, Ætna's white cone softly lengthening as it closed the vista. The prospect was truly dazzling. "Sol's bright isle, Trinacria," rejoiced in the light of her Lord and master; and when towards his decline each hill put on its robe of rich deep hue, and sat arrayed in purple, one bright spot upon their heads, till down he sank; —as they mourned in gloomy grey, Ætna stood alone, with a circlet of fire around her head which crowned her Queen.

Now the scene is hid by a rising rock of steep and angular form; the town, with saracenic tower upon its summit, is Castrogiovanne, the centre of Sicily, and beneath on the plain is a yawning cavern, out of which smoke might come. There

disappeared Proserpine in Pluto's car, dropping her flowers from her frightened hands, while Cyane her attendant nymph, who would pursue, flows by one stroke of the demon king's, as a harmless rivulet in the course his burning chariot wheels have made in that "blooming heath of Enna," midst whose sweetnesses Diana's hounds oft lost their scent.

The rising moon now silvers all these forms. . . . The carriage stops,—a figure very like Pluto comes with a light, says, "Signorine, you must come inside now." It is the good wizard, Don Salvatore, who makes us enter the cavern of the vehicle.

We had already shared some of our Marsala with him, and shown a wish to be civil, so that not only did he say he would not smoke, but also, when the troublesome postilions came and disturbed our mythological musings by asking for their "buona mano," which has now become a regular tax of five bajocchi per stage for each traveller, besides the price of the place, four piastres, Don Salvatore offered to pay it for us during the entire journey, settling the amount on arriving at Catania, so that we were left to muse and dream tranquilly, and only once disturbed by an awful rolling over the paved bed of a river near

Leonforte, when I really thought we were going down to Hades.

Next morning the very wretched appearance of the villages at daybreak showed what horrors we had fortunately slept through. Buried in mud, the tumble-down houses seemed to have no other foundation, and a little ragged boy or girl waded barefooted through it, to bring and take the letters, of which, besides the posted ones, the "Corriere" had a private packet for each place, for which he received less than the legal postage. The Government was thus caught in its own trap, stamps having just been introduced into the Peninsula part of the kingdom, and Sicily purposely excluded from the improvement, so that the people continued to find means of evading the heavy postage, and consequent difficulty of communication, by clubbing together, and giving him a tari for delivering a packet of letters which, sent through the post, might cost six or seven. This is one specimen in a thousand, of the ways in which this paternal Government forces its children to cheat it; making, as an intelligent gentleman said, who had now got into the carriage, *ad ogni passo un abuso* ("at each step an abuse"). A Sicilian letter is an old-fashioned shaped thing, like those brought on the

stage in a play, closed by a large seal of that sparkling brown wax, never seen in England except in boxes at bazaars, and the paper is of a rough excoriated quality, on which you must write with a steel pen, making that finicking handwriting a witty French governess used to call "pattes de mouches" (flies' feet), and which the Sicilians adorn with flourishes when taking great pains: foreign paper is very expensive and scarce.

Don Salvatore, who had been holding his cigar between his teeth during the night, that at all events he might feel its presence, at last could resist no longer, and wrapping himself in all the cloaks, went outside to smoke. On our remarking to the other passenger how considerate his whole conduct was, that gentleman said, the Corrieri in the kingdom of the two Sicilies were superior Government servants, of which their official uniform was the badge; and far from being uneducated men, were obliged to pass an examination of some difficulty, and be acquainted with two languages, before entering the service, in which they are promoted to Cabinet couriers when a vacancy occurs. Their conduct to us ladies, both in Sicily and the Neapolitan dominions, certainly did them credit whenever we travelled with the malle-poste, a mode

of conveyance all over Italy giving the comforts of private posting without any anxiety; and though sometimes the distances may be rather great, yet, over an uninteresting road, through a dirty country, a snug corner seat in a carriage is far better than a night at a poor inn. A Compagnio d'armi was in waiting with each relay of horses, though it was amusing to see him taking all the bridle-paths, and rejoining the carriage at the end of the stage; but the traveller may be quite easy at present: I will tell him how to tremble by and by in Calabria.

Before daylight came a halt for coffee, which is always ready in the village at three or four o'clock in the morning, according to the season of the year, for the labourers, who get a cup for one bajocco, instead of making it at home. We were alighting to drink some, when the Sicilian gentleman, quite shocked at the idea of our disturbing ourselves, brought a supply to the door, and during the whole of the rest of the journey made his servant constantly get down to bring us some nice little trifle; either the white loaves of Paternò, the delicious cactuses of Villa Bianca, or a nosegay of the lovely caper plant which curtained the road. Then he pointed us out, as daylight broke, the various environs: Bronte, Nelson's Bronte, where rich

vineyards grow into the snows of Ætna; Adernò and its great aqueduct, built by Prince Biscari, rivallising the works of the ancient Romans; Belpasso, a deserted village, the feeble remnant of whose inhabitants, almost exterminated by mal-aria, had unwillingly crept away, leaving its dark lava walls standing, and had built themselves other tenements where the air was pure. The mystery of good and bad air on certain spots of lava cannot be accounted for, as on the plain.

This last and many other little fugitive points were touched upon, till the near presence of Ætna absorbed all our feelings; it seemed to rise as from the earth beside us straight to the heavens; there was no invidious voice to suggest, "Remember, you are already 3,000 feet high." We had the full benefit of being close to the level of the sea, and from thence, goddess-like, she sprang, her three zones girding her around,—the inhabited, the cultivated, the wooded; above, unclogged by earth, she clothed herself with white, and as by the blush on the cheek of a maiden we know the lord of her heart is approaching ere we see him, so the blush on Ætna's snow tells the lordly sun is above the far horizon, and will soon throw his beams of warmth and love around, till the whole mount

stands revealed in one glowing mass, the crowning vapour e'en a roseate streak across the sky, a scene almost too great, too bright, for mortal sense. . . . Oh! mountain, mountain, speak thou to me, and I will answer thee! . . . How I feel thy presence! My heart beats to thine . . . All the grosser part of human nature I lay at thy feet, and catch a fore-glimpse of Paradise in contemplating thee—O most beautiful of the wonderful works of God!

Through lava walls we rolled down into Catania.

CHAPTER X.

CATANIA.

A TOWN'S "SIESTA" — LIVING FURIES — CORONETS — LOOKS AND DRESS OF THE CATANESE—OUR LETTERS OF INTRODUCTION—A "DUENNA" — THE BARON AND THE TRADESMAN — MORNING VISITORS—CURIOSITIES OF THE PLACE — THE MONASTERY — THE MUSEUMS—THE RUINS—THE CATHEDRAL—BRUTAL SUPERSTITION.

It was "siesta" time, between one and four o'clock, and but a few dark "Manto's" glided through the lava streets. The inhabitants were hushed in repose; awnings were drawn tight down over the bazaars and shops, their entrances secured by barricaded doors; a Pompeian silence reigned around. Through it rumbled the vehicle with noise like an earthquake. A sleepy porter bore our bags to the Hotel Ætna, where, after climbing three flights of crumbling stairs, any doubt as to the present existence of the Furies was completely set at rest by the appearance of the three hostesses, who, roused from their slumbers, met us with streaming, grisly hair. They conducted us to an apartment worse than any we had had inland, for which they asked double what they decided to

take, and quickly making up a bed with their awful long nails, left us to future torments.

After a sound nap, which I recommend every one to take who has travelled through the night, instead of setting off to explore a new place without rest, which gives a dreadfully fagged feeling the following day, we brushed up, and set out with our letters of introduction. The remark of the first awakening lazzaroni we passed, told that the English ladies' hats and feathers were uncommon in Catania. He lazily asked, "Siete una ballerina, Signora?" ("Are you a dancer, Signora?")

The streets have a decidedly handsome effect, particularly that with the sea at one end and Mount Ætna at the other, and which seemed to lead straight to the mountain, whose namesake it is. Two open squares give a variety to the angular form of the principal thoroughfares; the houses are festooned with balconies; towers and domes rise up in abundance; but, on the slightest investigation, ruin peers through everything. Lava does not retain plaster well, and the inhabitants cover it with coats of blue, pink, and green, which, partially falling off, leave hideous gaps, through which the original material seems by comparison of a grimmer black. Here and there

a smiling orange-garden peeps through a grating or over a frittering wall, and looks so eastern one cannot but be pleased. Crowds of carriages appear the moment the siesta is over. They nearly all bear coronets, the majority being, like those of the English barons, four large balls on red velvet, and belonging to baronial families of rather a good order of nobility (if there were not too many of them), which formed the hereditary members of the Upper Chamber when the Parliament existed, in which position they ranked above the princes, marquises, &c.

The ladies and gentlemen seated inside the carriages had, in the shape of their attire, imitated the French as much as possible, merely adding a variety of colour, in the same love of brilliancy which makes them paint their houses: they drove in lines up and down, making *Corso* in the streets, as there is no public drive outside the town: every now and then, a young man, splendidly got up, with moustaches and cigar in mouth, evidently a leader of Catanian *ton*, would dash down the centre, driving his beautiful English horses. The ancient dress or graceful Manto, a long black silk cloak thrown over the head, and caught bewitchingly under one arm, is entirely now left to the wives of the lower orders.

We had two letters, one to a nobleman's family, the other to a silk merchant, who possessed a large manufactory, the principal "industry" of the place; but, though celebrated, I must warn lady readers who are within reach of any other against buying Sicilian silk; particularly that twilled kind which, when of French make, never wears out, while the Catanian, if sprinkled by a slight shower of rain, puckers all over; the plain quality is thin, and has no gloss; it is sold in quantity at Naples at a very cheap rate to the natives.

We thought we would take the letter to the Baron first, as we heard he was a liberal-minded man, had been in England, of which his family spoke the language, and had learned there some notions of the way in which a gentleman ought to live; for the reader must know that abroad, it is only the tip-top nobility, with immense fortunes, who approach in the least to the style of the simple English gentry; when in more northern Italy I have seen them puffing in all the pomp of their titles, and thinking they were conferring an honour in mixing with plain English commoners, I have inwardly laughed at how much more an English girl thought of the attention of a *real* English gentleman, so superior in finish and mind. The Baron's family

had just returned in an overpoweringly smart carriage of blue and silver; a handsome, and tolerably clean marble staircase led up to the first story of the palace where they resided; a livery servant showed us through a large painted ante-room into a drawing-room, which was really fit to enter,—spacious and neatly furnished; it opened into another apartment, where a table was laid for dinner so as one could rather fancy sitting down to it: clean napkins and glasses being placed for each person. The gentleman's daughters came very pleasantly forward, and spoke English well, one having just passed her honeymoon in London; the mother was merely visible in the distance in a wrapper, evidently bustling about the dinner; the son was a dandy, and not very willing to enter into details as to how mules, guides, &c. could be got for Ætna; so we inwardly decided to go to the silk merchant for the "practicals." The young ladies presented us with sweet little mandarine oranges, the first of the season, and exquisitely luscious; an inferior kind are known as Maltese oranges in England.

This family, and another we afterwards heard of, were the only two who attempted to receive foreigners in Catania; the others all live in the des-

perate Italian manner, and, as some possess fortunes of eight or ten thousand per annum, with a tenth of which carriage, horses, opera-box, and all reasonable pleasures can be procured, having no occupation for the mind, they take to gambling with the remainder, as at Palermo.

The merchant, despite his manufactory, kept a shop, the distinction between wholesale and retail being very confused in Sicily. Mounting to his apartment on the first floor, we found the door barricaded, as if the entrance of a fortress; and there being no bell, our knuckles were sorely tried in making an impression on its thick outside. The sole result was a screaming inside, like a hag in a passion, and a fearful bang of a distant door. We stood in despair on the stairs, till a being likely to help us should come past; at length a man who knew something of the inmates, by making a peculiar noise, got one of them to the door; and after a long parley through the creaks as to what we were, which he found difficult to explain, being completely mystified himself, the iron hinges groaned backwards, and we were let in by an elderly female acting Duenna to the merchant's pretty young wife, who in her zeal kept her mistress barricaded up during the husband's

absence, and not knowing our voices, thought it more prudent to leave us outside.

While the letter was sent to him, we were shown into a pretty apartment with the first wooden floor we had seen for three months, and whose fresh, white draperies and elegant pieces of furniture, just put in order for the bride, showed how much in advance for luxuries were the trading to the noble class, whose gaunt palaces require uncomfortable old furniture in keeping with their size. The tête-à-tête with the two females was fortunately short, as their screaming Sicilian twang was both fatiguing and incomprehensible; the old duenna, whom we thought intolerably forward, taking all the words out of her young mistress's mouth, and extra shrieking them herself; her officiousness also was exactly what we afterwards saw ridiculed on the Italian stage: in fact, with uneducated, that is, most Sicilians, the servants, particularly the females, regularly take part in the conversation, and on the slightest pretext, such as holding a shawl, draw in a chair for the remainder of the visit. They ought to be very much attached to their masters and mistresses, as they are certainly "treated as one of the family."

The merchant soon appeared; a lively, intelligent

man, and entered with a sort of amused, doubting interest, into our Ætna plans; promising to see after a carriage and guides, and so strongly recommending a change for the night from Hotel Ætna to the "Corona," that we went to look at that house. An immense crowd of people, all afflicted with ophthalmia, was on the stairs, and being received in turn by a celebrated eye-doctor in the dining-room. We preferred the company of the Furies, who were only three in number; and finding dinner had been prepared by them, requested the youngest and best-looking, sister-in-law to the others, might wait upon us, fancying she had a milder nature; till next morning, happening by mere chance in the dark passage, to open the door of a room where she was sitting receiving the adoration of a "Cavaliere," she sprung forward in such a manner as to prove most satisfactorily that she also was endowed with the full Fury nature.

Not having seen anything like a regular dinner since leaving Palermo, the various little dishes of dressed pigeon, salad, sweets, &c. seemed very nice; and as the Baron's son had heard that we had been to the merchant's house, with quick Sicilian jealousy he immediately came to call, and sat in attendance while we ate, assuring us he would

see all about carriages and conveyances; then wrote a letter of introduction to a fine old naturalist, who resided on Ætna, and with whom my readers must become better acquainted. In the meantime arrived the merchant, with two Caputti; and the noble took his departure, though longing to ask questions and compare notes with him about us.

Next morning, before rising, the following subjects came for our inspection preparatory to ascending the mountain:—amber of an ugly, greasy yellow, cut into hearts, crosses, and other useful things; a dozen pair of hairy stockings, which would have excoriated the legs of an elephant; three puppy bull-dogs with newly-clipped ears; begging friars, to whom we told the story of the Caltanisetta priest, and who, notwithstanding, hung about till we left, obliging us to lock our room-door every time we went in and out; a tray of *antiquities* of broken delf; four guides to subterraneous ruins; and finally our coachman, to say "last night's arrangement was off." This latter circumstance was not an irreparable misfortune, as of course our gentleman acquaintance had arrived a little after Aurora, accompanied by yesterday's fellow-traveller besides; sending them in search of another conveyance was a capital manner of getting them

out of the way till breakfast-time, when they returned as spectators for that meal; and to occupy them a little further, we begged they would help to manage the Furies. We had become completely inured to feeding before an audience, and thought ourselves supremely fortunate in finding a sort of saloon without beds, though I cannot call it a private room, as a row of doors opened into it on each side, and large folding ones from the passage; round which, though on the third story and in a comparatively civilised town, a circle of miscellanies were collected peeping.

As it is not necessary to start early for Nicolosi, the village twelve miles up on Ætna, the traveller has time to visit the town, the greatest charm of which will be to many, that it was Bellini's birthplace, whose lovely "consumptive" melodies express all the sensibility of a refined Sicilian mind. He died at the age of twenty-nine, and must, as a child, have often sat listening to the strains of the grand organ at the Benedictine monastery. The traveller should go there before ten o'clock, when the monks, who are all gentlemen of good family, are collecting for matins, and civilly mentioning to one of them that he is a stranger, some of the finer stops of the instrument, not generally used, will be pulled out, and as

it is one of the best in the world, musician or not, he will be gratified. Gentlemen are allowed to visit the interior of the monastery, said to be a most comfortable place; ladies not; we were obliged to be content with a distant peep at the garden, where the monks proudly point out a dark stream of lava in the rock above, which at the great eruption was on the point of overwhelming their vines and orange groves; when, with a consideration extraordinary in a boiling body, the lava, unwilling to annoy such capital fellows, divided and made a circling wall around them. They are a branch of the Palermo Benedictines, equally wealthy and good-tempered, as the reader shall judge from one with whom we afterwards became acquainted; they are the trustees of innumerable rich charities, which they do not always dispense to the satisfaction of the would-be recipients: consequently at the revolution were great sufferers, being dragged from under their beds, where they had sheltered, and massacred by numbers.

But they, ere they died, had also taken advantage of the confusion to effect a piece of rapine. A letter had been addressed to their community by the Abbate Trimeno of Naples, who came to see them in the year 1400, and which commenced in

this fashion:—"Ye Benedictines now think of nought but dining, playing, courting: what would St. Benedict say were he to descend and pay you a pastoral visit some morning?" and so on. This exhortation had been read every day at dinner to them for four centuries and a half, without in the least altering the state of things, till they thought it high time to get rid of such a waste of words, and, in the revolution struggle, threw it into the fire.

The Catanese think a great deal of their antiquities; but, as they are all subterranean, to those who can see Syracuse, Taormina, or Girgenti, whose trophies are above ground, a visit to their own wine cellar will be quite as satisfactory. We followed a woman with a smoking torch through pools of water, round and about some mouldering walls, of whose signification, had we not been to the former town, we should not have had the most distant idea; but which go by the name of the Grecian theatre; while a similar damp collection is called the Roman amphitheatre. The Museo Biscari, founded by the Prince of that name (who also built the aqueduct, was a benevolent, enlightened man, and made every effort to become a public benefactor), is a scrappy selection of small antiquities found in the

island: the torso of Jove is considered a fine specimen, certainly very ugly; the cicerone could not give the least information about anything under his care, but begged very perseveringly for more money, though well paid; showing he had already dealt with the English. There is another museum, called Gioeni, which, as we did not see, we fancied must be superior.

While waiting for the entrance of the first-named building to be opened, we witnessed a scene which I really must beg my reader's pardon for describing, and only do so to illustrate the manners of the people, and the awful ignorance and superstition in which they are buried, while troops of priests parade the streets, and no Protestant is allowed to give instruction. The shrieks of a cock in the street near the opposite house forced us to look round—to see it plucked and opened while living!—As soon as our faintness would allow us to express horror, we were answered, "it was a work of necessity, a child in that house being ill of a fever, which the spell of this ceremony alone could cure!" The same "ceremony" is universal all over the island.

Beneath the Cathedral, a showy edifice, there are cavities called ancient baths, once adorned with frescoes, of which one fancies the remains are

visible: the marks of chariot wheels in the lava, as at Pompeii, are really there. A curious old picture hangs in the sacristy, showing the last destruction of Catania by Ætna in 1669, which was preceded by total darkness. The flowing lava is systematically running down in blood-red streams from a crater now called Monte Rosso, close to Nicolosi, on the side of the volcano. Arrived before Catania's walls, it had to rise more than sixty feet high before it could pass over them, which at length it did; and in the foreground, a group of monks with relics and the veil of the patron saint of the town, hasten to embark in a galley waiting for them. That veil and its wearer St. Agatha, were out of favour for a long time after allowing their worshippers to be so cruelly overwhelmed; now the Catanese have made it up with their patrons again; for between eruptions and earthquakes, they have great need of some one to take care of them, and Providence's is the last aid they would think of invoking. Once the lava ran in a beautiful curve far into the sea, forming a complete harbour; in a succeeding convulsion, that disappeared, and a lava promontory may now be seen on the opposite side, forming a good foreground to a sketch of Ætna. Nothing will induce the inhabitants to change the position

of their town, so we may conclude a love of convulsions and eruptions is natural to them; as soon as they have been overwhelmed, they take the very same destroying blocks to rebuild with, and which, unlike those of Vesuvius, are of a hard, durable nature.

CHAPTER XI.

LIFE ON ÆTNA.

CARRIAGE ROAD ON THE MOUNTAIN—MONTE VITTORI A NEARER EXCURSION—NICOLOSI AND ITS PHILOSOPHER—A REAL TRIAL—A SICILIAN RUSTIC INN—IL DIAVOLO—NATIVE ENTHUSIASM ABOUT ÆTNA—QUEEN ELEANOR—INTERIOR OF A MONASTERY—DO MONKS FLIRT?—LEVYING TROOPS—DOWN TO SYRACUSE, AND BACK AGAIN.

Now the witching time is approaching for ascending this wondrous Ætna, and a nice carriage with three horses comes to the door. As into it we step, our friends begin to think we are really in earnest; they look solemn and livid, try some farewell advice, and stand in ominous attitudes watching us out of sight.

The road, when once off the lava pavement, is of a fine black sand, fenced in with low walls of the same colour; it is wide and good withal, the gloom taken off by the thick groves of bordering cactus or prickly pear, in full fruit, being plucked by crowds of peasants who for three months live upon nothing else but this

delicious nutritious food, which has all the properties of bread, besides furnishing the distiller with a rich brandy to adulterate Marsala for the English market. Here and there a magnificent scarlet flower still remains, crowning the fan-like leaves; above branch the orange and citron-trees, with their brilliant verdure and Hesperides balls; a thousand fragrances float in the mountain air, whose delicate sharpness is a stimulant in the *dolce far niente* feeling creeping over us, as we lean back in the carriage and for three hours live in contemplation of Ætna, with her hundred craters, rising above Catania's fertile plain.

Two obelisks mark where the road turns off to the mountain, the other part continuing to the various villages on her sides; we had passed through several, all like little Catanias, built of painted lava, and with churches of most pretentious architecture, some quite crooked with earthquake shocks, and one whose bells were obliged to be tolled from the opposite side, for fear of bringing down its leaning tower. The entrances to the various villas were chiefly of the triumphal style; a brilliant rainbow arch inscribed with the owner's name, and a row of columns connected by vines, would lead to a disconsolate

yellow or green edifice of uncompromising squareness, save where a knowing little belvedere sprang out of some corner; the unglazed casements filled up with stones, removed only when the proprietor came to *pique-nique,* as they themselves call a party of friends for whom they take provisions for the day, and perhaps a piano. The Sicilians remain at their Casinos as a matter of duty during the grape and cacti season on Ætna, the hay and harvest season on the plain; when they send forward a little furniture, and think they are doing a most patriarchal work, the thoughtless ones leaving all superintendence to their stewards, none having the slightest idea of enjoying country life for itself. We passed a proprietor superintending the ploughing of his field in slippers and flowery dressing-gown.

After twelve miles' slow creeping up the road, a church with magnificent plaster dome appeared at the end; we ascended a little lava-paved lane opposite, passed between two bright rose-coloured columns, and entered the Locanda dell' Ætna at Nicolosi. A party were already there, but only for the day, and were setting off to Monte Vittorì,—an extinct volcano, from which those who do not wish to ascend the real mountain

can have an excellent idea of its structure, and a fine view over the Syracusan side of the island, with the Lake of Lentini, and a variety of towns. It is a ride of two hours and a half on mules, which can always be had at Nicolosi early in the day. After stopping on their return for a little refreshment, the party can be back at Catania the same evening.

There is a second, and very neat little inn, close to Dr. Gemelaro's house; to that gentleman we now took our letter, and found a fine old philosopher, with brilliant black eyes and grey hair, who began to lecture us most paternally on our ascending ideas. He, having lived at the village thirty years, and the word Ætnean being always attached to his name, certainly had a right to be considered something of an authority; but he had also not become a philosopher in vain, therefore did not attempt to argue with a young lady,—for I must here exculpate Mamma entirely from any willing share in the adventure; she was always for Monte Vittorì, and it was only by immense perseverance in the process known as "talking over" I got her to try the real mountain. Had she not consented, how much she would have missed, and without any unpleasant consequences!

What an awful thing it is for parents to disobey their children!

While the Ætnean was making preparation for the morrow, and saying that his sixty years alone prevented his setting out with us (the Sicilian idea of "*accompagnare*" extending as high as Ætna), we sketched his house with part of the village, which makes a most characteristic little bit, and received an al fresco visit from the Cancelliere, or official authority of the place, who said he had left his young daughter at home praying for us! We watched the sunset together, saw the vines glow purple; a long sharp cloud called the "Serpe" (serpent) stretch across the mountain, and the lovely evening sink into night; made the acquaintance of our two peasant guides; ordered the landlord to pack a basket of all that was required for the morrow; held a reception of village notabilities while supping off cold fowl and goat's milk; then retired to rest on a bed so hard, it must have been of lava.

Next morning at four, we rose, dressed, went out into the air; saw dark clouds hovering above, and, just as I put my foot into the stirrup of the saddle on a fine fat mule, a drop of rain fell . . . My heart sunk, like a thermometer, below zero.

Despite the assurances that the sky would clear immediately, an impudent drizzle began; we returned indoors, and understood what blankness was . . . Did you ever hear of such a disappointment? Kind reader, do sympathise with us!

After sitting in a state of vacancy till daybreak,—when we felt so angry with the dull foggy dawn that we took to bed again not to see it,—we awoke in somewhat a better frame of mind, and I may as well tell you the proper preparations for this expedition,—when one is not disappointed. Ladies should take a guide and a mule each; the price of the former is one piastre and a half, of the latter, one piastre, including the man who attends the animals; so that for us two, the expense was to have been seven piastres, including the guides' mules, which they always require, but do not expect a buona mano, unless they give extra satisfaction. The strangers' book contained some complaints of their conduct—for example, declining to go on; but more likely the travellers were unreasonable, as the six appointed guides are all picked men who take a pride in counting the times they reach the summit, and Dr. Gemelaro Ætnea has them under his strict superintendence,

himself feeling an interest in every pilgrim, whether they bring letters of introduction to him or not, and, if at all nice intelligent persons, he is delighted to see them without, being himself a perfect gentleman.

The provisions necessary for the expedition are strong bottled tea or coffee (much better than wine or spirits in that temperature and altitude), cold meat, a little cheese, bread, and some refreshing fruits, such as cacti; and of all together about as much as would be sufficient for a long day's excursion in the Westmoreland hills. The landlord has baskets, glasses covered with wickerwork, and a little apparatus for making a charcoal fire. He understands packing everything up, though the traveller had better superintend, and also make a point of paying the guides himself, as he is not quite to be depended on; we told him on the wet morning to give the men each a bottle of good wine to console them a little in their disappointment, which wine he charged us for, and we found out afterwards they had not received; excepting this bit of treachery his conduct was very good and attentive, with all the civility consequent upon the vicinity of a rival establishment.

He is just now entering the room to ask what

is to become of the carriage and horses; our friends had arranged we should keep them three days; one to go up, one to rest, one to come down, for eight ducats and a half; a very bad bargain, as we afterwards found any carriage was willing to go off the stand for twenty tari (two ducats), and the landlord sends for one at the same price when the traveller wishes to return, or he can descend on a mule. We thought the man would have claimed the whole sum under pretence of being willing to wait another day, but he compounded for six ducats, and went down. For do you think, reader, I had relinquished or was at all doubtful about the ascending project? no, no, more determined than ever! and persuaded mamma to wait till the weather cleared up.

Though it poured for five days running, we never spent a pleasanter time, going out between the storms, and thoroughly exploring the characteristics of Ætna; indeed, a residence on the mountain is necessary to fully appreciate its charms; but before saying more about them, let me finish telling you of the proper preparations for conquering them all.

As to toilette, it should be warm but light, with extras for slipping on and off according to temperature. The snow is deep, so the petticoats must be

short, and as the feet *will* get wet through, it is useless wearing heavy goat-hair stockings, as when damp they are a very great weight to lift at every step. Ordinarily thick boots and woollen stockings are sufficient, with an extra pair to change on the mountain. Mamma had gutta-percha goloshes, but the snow got inside, and she does not recommend them. In summer people ascend during the night, see the sun rise, and descend before the violent heat of the afternoon commences; in winter this is impossible, even with a bright moon, owing to the severe cold, and is also less interesting; so that two or three hours before sunrise is a good time for starting, arranging both on going and returning to sleep at Nicolosi, which is an easy manner of breaking the distance, always opposed at Catania, where it is said to be a dreadful place, affording nothing to eat, while on the contrary we found such nice things, they made us regret having taken the trouble of carrying provisions up. As to internal arrangements, though the accommodation was Sicilian, it was the best we had met with inland; indeed, I think I may pronounce it clean, but do so very cautiously, as perhaps our views had become less orthodox on that point. The absence of the furies and all screaming, for the first time for three

weeks, was an immense relief; there was no one to squeak but a pig, and as pork appeared upon the table two hours afterwards, that noise was done away with. The landlord waited at table: a very meek spouse cooked, and added up the moderate expenses every evening to save arguments. An immense room with bright brick floor and arched ceiling (of light paste and paper against earthquakes), and an inner vault for bed, were four tari a night, including immensely long church-candles in black bottles. This was the only regular room in the house; five or six natives slept in an antechamber, the proprietors in an outhouse; and positively at that altitude, constantly exposed to snow storms, there were no fire-places in the whole village! Being damp and chilly with the rain, we were obliged continually to have fresh pans of burning charcoal brought in, and had it not been for the various cross draughts from the three windows and four doors, should have been smothered over and over again. Nothing is so aggravating as not to find the least preparation for winter in Italy, where it is always so bitterly cold except in the heat of the sun; the Sicilians have no excuse, as coal can be had in the island for the digging, and it makes the women extra slatterns,

being tied up in a dozen shawls all day, and their fingers encased in old gloves with the tips cut off.

We were just beginning to pout, when the Ætnean philosopher's servant arrived with a basket of good things; fruit, sweets, and a *very* peculiar wine called "The Queen of England's." The cacti were all peeled and wrapped separately in white paper, which is the elegant way of presenting them. Soon the donor arrived himself, and as he had of course heard of our misfortune immediately (a Sicilian village, for the speedy transmission of news, being very like an English one), brought books, drawings, fossils, and lava enough for a week's rainy days. He paid us a pleasant visit of information, condolence, and admiration, with a spice of flirtation to be true to his country; this visit he repeated twice a day, never waning in his kind attentions, really putting himself at our service; and even, to do everything in proper style, managing to get up two tiffs with rivals, so that there could not have been a more cheerful companion. Talking of the independence of English ladies, he said nothing in his life had made so great an impression on him, as the first he had ever seen having been one of the daughters of Lady Charlotte Bury, as he landed from one of H. M.'s men-of-war (in whose

service he was), at Nice. She was running about catching butterflies in a net, between that place and Villa Franca; and with whom, when he had dared to think her mortal, he ventured to expostulate by saying, "*Ma Signora, sola in questa solitudine?*" ("Ma Signora! alone in this solitude?") she tossed her head, and ran off here and there with her net, not deigning to answer his remark.

The first walk to take from Nicolosi is one of about an hour, to Monte Rosso, the higher of two craters thrown up the last time Catania was destroyed, and which stand together like twin soldiers, of a brilliant red, save where the vines clothe their steep sides. Arrived at the top, on looking down the concave craters, beautiful trees are seen to grow from whence the consuming fire once issued. Looking around, endless other volcanic hills appear crowding together over Ætna's sides, to the number, it is said, of more than a hundred, which peculiarity makes her so different to other mountains. They are turned into vineyards, and everybody in the neighbourhood who can afford it, has his own pet crater, and drinks the wine. When fresh lava streams meet one of these hills they surround it, and gradually melt it down until it join their course by fusion.

The number of eruptions of Ætna which have taken place is tremendous, according to its children's account,—seventy-seven after, and eleven before the Christian era. Their adoration for their mountain is most exalted. "Within the 160 miles around its base there are the productions of a dozen nations," say they, "besides the towns happy to rest at the foot of the fair object. Does she not bring us, in her second zone, corn, wine, oil, silk, spice, fruit; in her third and sylvan one, wood, flocks, game, tar, cork, honey; and while her spotless summit bears snow to cool our scorching tongues all summer, in her foundations you will find burning sulphur, mercury, alum, nitre, vitriol. . . . . What nation is so liberal to her children as our mount?" To mention eruptions or earthquakes, only makes them add, "No spectacle in the world is so grand as her blazing lava; her convulsions also supply our cravings for deep emotions; all the poetry left with us comes from her." Such enthusiasm (they are even angry with Homer for not mentioning her smoke) would animate an indifferent rambler;—how much more one to whose childhood Ætna had been a fairy queen, adorned with all the charms a tender imagination knows so well how to muse on, whose presence realised every wish, and round whom

hangs all the romance of mythology? Yes, the ascent of Ætna is a refined pilgrimage, gratifying mind, memory, feeling, education, heart.

Nicolosi had once been overwhelmed by lava; the present village is built in view of the ruins of the former, as the survivors felt sure the stream would not come the same way for a long, long time again. The last eruption in 1854, a very fine one, made the crater called "Antenario," on the eastern side of the mountain; people were able to read by its light on the western side. They quizzed an English family who happened to be ascending at the time it broke out, and who, though on quite a safe part of the mountain, hurried away dreadfully frightened, from the scene all were hastening to see, and not content with descending pell-mell, immediately drove away from Catania also; pale, haggard, and trembling. "*Ha! non orano volcani al pare di noi!*" They were not volcanic, like the Sicilians.

The distance to the crater from Catania is from twenty-four to twenty-eight miles, according to the way chosen; to get over twelve of these in a carriage must be great help to any one, except they are like an Irishman, who a year or two since arrived at Catania in the morning, walked

the whole distance to the summit, came down without stopping, and rode off to Syracuse the same evening. He has been known as "Il Diavolo" ever since.

On Sunday morning the women came out in their elegant "Manti;" bonnets, even on the daughters of government officials at 20*l.* per annum, being unknown up there: they went to church alone. The effect of the kneeling black figures along the aisle was completely Spanish. The men have separate Mass, which was the cause, once upon a time, of them all being buried together in one of the earthquakes, when the church was thrown down, while the absent women escaped. Sunday is also the day "charity" is distributed from the Benedictine convent, the last building on Ætna, admirably placed for the painter midst magnificent stone-pines, surrounded by extinct craters, which supply the generous wines that make the monks so radiant, and which the poor around say were intended to make them radiant also, with corn, and other good things bequeathed. However, they are now put off with each a halfpenny roll, and we saw them walking miles for this tit-bit.

Way having been made midst the crowd collected

at the monastery, we passed into the "cell" (a pleasant sitting-room with balcony) of one of the monks, a gentlemanly person, attired in plain clothes, except the black silk legs and rosetted shoes. He spoke English fluently, and with great animation told us that his having been in our country was the reason for sending him up to say Mass on Sundays at that altitude, the other monks always shifting their turn on him, saying "he ought to be able to bear extreme cold;" their idea of the temperature of the British climate, which, coupled with perpetual darkness, is the same all over Italy. The monks merely make a "villeggiatura" place of their cloisters in summer, when the coolness is delightful. A captain's wife of one of Her Majesty's ships stationed at Malta was brought from thence in a dying state, carried up in a hammock, and recovered in a week. She was not the first lady who had had quarters in the convent. Queen Eleanor of Toledo, wife of Roger, one of the early Norman kings, was so overcome by the sight of the piety of the monks who then resided there, that when much depressed by her husband's death, she decided to live always near them. As then the rule not to admit ladies was adhered to, she ordered a little hut to be built by the side of the chapel, and which is still standing,

where she spent twelve years, carrying water from the cistern between her prayers. One reads so often in history of kings, queens, and other people retiring from the Vanity-fairs of their day into cells, that it was most interesting seeing one that had actually sheltered a romantic sovereign.

After a lunch of fruit and wine, an exploring expedition was proposed, and the gentlemanly monk offered me his riding horse, an animal which seemed to delight in galloping about in all directions. His master ran after him as well as he could, and joined him when on the lava rocks, which lie about in picturesque seaside-like confusion. We sat on the top of a cave, where Ceres lighted two "Tannen torches," and went underground in search of her daughter. Having heard so much of the monks' gallantry, I had the curiosity to try very mildly if they really could flirt a little; and having cleared up the point, no young ladies need in future take the trouble of trying the experiment. On returning to the village, the peasants, who had never seen a lady galloping about before, came out in a body, looking rather nice in their Sunday clothes, so I formed them into a square as soldiers, and made them march back; the aide-de-camp at my side saying, "Ha! Signora, could we really have you

as queen of our armies for only three years, how we could conquer and be free!" With a sceptre in prospect, nothing but the recent visit to Queen Eleanor's cell kept me from wishing a revolution would break out immediately.

Of course, from this day Dr. Gemelaro and the monk were mortal enemies. I have just had a letter from the philosopher, saying he still never sees him without a wish to assassinate him, and that his only comfort is that he never recovered the violent running after the horse, having been comparatively thin ever since. Poor fellow! Yet we let him finish the whole of the "Queen of England's sweet wine" before going down to Catania, where he was obliged to be at the Ave Maria.

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday were still pouring days. We had mended all our clothes, finished off all our sketches, skimmed all the books, so sent for a carriage (the traveller must take care to order a close one if it be wet weather), and drove down in the bed of a cascade to Catania. After hanging about thirty-six hours only, waiting for the Palermo courier, stopped by the swollen rivers, we set off to Syracuse, spent a day there, saw the sky clearing and Ætna appearing through the clouds; went instantly on board the steamer, returned to

Catania, took a carriage, and arrived at Nicolosi by ten o'clock at night; were met by the watch-dog, who barked up the people,—put everything in order for the ascent on the morrow:—I will tell you all about Syracuse when we come down. Good night!

CHAPTER XII.

ASCENT OF MOUNT ÆTNA.

"And climbed with heart the adverse steep."

DANTE.

A SOFT tinkling of bells beneath the window said "Rise!" and though the young moon was alone in the sky with one pale star, the orange dawn lay as a broad belt on the dark Ionian sea. We boundingly dress, and spring on the mules with palpitating pleasure, for is not the fulfilment of our dream, our *object*,—and you of ardent temperament know all that word contains,—near its fulfilment?

Nicolosi, black sepulchre of lava as it seems, with its sleeping inhabitants, is traversed in silence, the ponderous animals sink hoof-deep into the jetty sand, and trembling hope keeps us speechless. On, on,—let the village sink contemptuously into

formless mass with the kindred blocks around,—our aim is *there*, where a soft, soft form is felt to rise.

Soon sight comes to feeling; and as a white light slowly spreads around, it is more decidedly caught by eastward sloping snows, till waxing and waxing with purer intensity, through reflecting its flameless brilliancy, a white vacuum is made by a spotless pyramid in the deep blue sky.

Pace on, pace on, ye steady mules! with your noses so methodically strung together; dawn is advancing into morn, the pure white light is changing into ardent fire, and now one glorious flame leaps forth; the mountain quails at its touch, the snow bounds as it feels the scorch of its golden light, and cold Ætna is wrapped in sunbeams.

Now glow, O east! now blush, O mount! now sparkle, O hoar-frost, which covers with diamond manna the Desert of Lava! Rejoice with us that a glorious summer's day has begun in mid-winter, while Angiolo and Gorgio devoutly smile upwards, and thank Santa Lucia!

At the moment the sun's rays reach the ground, the oaks stretch out their shady branches to us, and we enter the region called "Bosco." Though the month is December, and much snow has

fallen, many of the leaves still cling to the trees, the ivy round the trunks is brilliantly green; the roots are buried in ferns; the scene is that of a beautiful English park, we continually expect peeping antlers to rise and disappear, followed by bounding fawns. In summer when the foliage is thick, it must be like entering a cool grot to arrive at the Bosco from the horrid coal-cellar below, which the sun, I am sure, mistaking for the real thing, endeavours with all his might to ignite. The hour and a half passed in this sylvan scene, the only one in poor heated Sicily, was delightful! breathing the morning freshness we were carried dreamingly on, and it was not till a few patches of snow commenced sharing the ground with the moss, and at every step became more and more encroaching, usurping the whole ground, only just allowing the heavy oaks room to rise knottingly upwards, that the sense of the presence of Ætna above returned. The mules, from which the guides had alighted, after battling bravely with their slippery footing, were beginning to sink knee-deep in the snow; then one in crossing the frozen bed of a rivulet turned completely over. The guides looked what they would say—"Yours may do the same any moment." We dismounted with a sigh in

front of a great hill of perpendicular white, one of the little inequalities of the mountain, and then felt the moment was come when two of the wonders of creation, a snowy volcanò and a woman's curiosity, were to try their ardour against each other, though the former had placed its crater 11,000 feet out of reach. The Bosco continued for some distance yet, and other explorers had always been able to ride beyond it. However, at the foot of Monte Vittorì our mule sacrifice was made; and as in getting off I staggered a little from sitting two hours in the same position, I saw one of the guides shake his head distrustfully to the other, without having then an idea of the extent of their doubts of our powers; for you must know, reader, though occasionally making a wonderful exertion, we are "deceitfully delicate looking," as some have said with surprise after reading our passage of the Sógne Fjeld in Norway. The cloaks, hoods, and overstocking, and all extras, were left with the muleteer, who had orders to wait at the confines of the wood. The guides wished much to leave the shawls also; but dreading the twenty degrees of cold promised above, we would not give them up. Mamma took Angiolo's, I Georgio's arm, and we set off with a conquering step.

After a few paces I began to outstrip her, when she called me back, and said in a mild, but matronly firm tone, "My dear, the single condition on which I will attempt this ascent is, that you remain behind me, merely following, letting me regulate the rate at which we walk;" which she did on so excellent a plan, that I attribute the success of the whole attempt to her, and think it the only one on which ladies, and perhaps some gentlemen also, can ascend high mountains with comfort. It was to continue at a uniform steady pace, stopping to breathe every now and then, *before* the lungs were quite exhausted. By this proceeding we got on so comfortably, that, if there were no other obstacle, I felt we could easily have walked up the Himalayas with plenty of time, and the repressed ardour acted as steam later on the journey.

As yet hills of snow rose on every side, succeeding each other and allowing of no view; by degrees they became farther apart, and sinking one below the other as we rose, presented an extraordinary appearance. Extinct craters as they were, and all concave at the summit, their hollows filled with white glistening snow, looking down upon them they seemed a collection of colossal por-

celain wash-hand basins. At this point the view began to be interesting, as the lower craters were also visible, some half covered with snow, others only slightly powdered, the amount of white showing their distance, till they melted into the rich red and puce of Sicilian surface. One of the beauties of Ætna's ascent is, that owing to its sloping sides, nothing invidiously hides the vast horizon around, which expands beneath the charmed eye so captivatingly that it *must* watch it, thus cheating fatigue, and animating by a feeling of commanding position to continual advancement, until within reach of the great "Piano delle Lave" towards the summit, when nearer objects of interest advance, and for a while console the climber until his former horizon reappear in magic grandeur.

For two hours we walked with perfect facility on crisp hard snow, and saw with exulting pleasure that the "Montagnuolo," which from beneath seems almost close to the crater, was gradually losing its unattainable appearance, and allowing us to sidle up to its base, when an overpowering difficulty made itself felt,—the heat, which placed a fiery barrier on our rising path, and during the whole ascent made an almost invincible resistance to our advancement. The shawls one by

one were thrown off; handkerchiefs followed; the heavy cloth petticoats next, till the poor guides were quite disguised with bearing the extra garments, and meekly quoted their former advice to leave them with the muleteer. Yet they had no right to be warm; for if the heat of Africa breathe over Ætna's snows in winter, can the imagination even,—that ardent burner!—glow to the slightest idea of what Sicilian climate must be in summer, when they declared it was much hotter? All the national fire of character became at once comprehensible to us, and even infectious; as stifling heat spreads languor and exhausted indifference around, so do the directly darting rays stir up the soul to rage, and maddening the blood, make it impel the body on to opposition. No, heat! you shall not vanquish! Though, unexpected, determined, and ferocious, you find us without even the shade of a tiny umbrella against your attacks! That hour's toil up to the column was inexpressibly painful. We tried to walk in the guides' shadows, to gasp one panting breath of air, to raise the swimming head,—it was ardour against ardour,—and when, bathed in fire, on a desert of snow, we threw ourselves at the base of the lava pyramid, saw a great white Sahara

extending beyond, with another Ætna rising from it in the steamy distance,—then, heat, you had well-nigh been conqueror.

A quarter of an hour's torpid rest, immovably stretched upon the despised woollens, restored to us the power of movement, and also made us sensible of a very slight, very sharp, and very refreshing wind, grazing past from the north, and which, when we had donned the thickest shawls, was as the fountain of hope to a blistered mind, or nectar air sent by Jove—that gallant god, always touched by female wishes, and who keeps the hideous Titan Enceladus out of the way, crushed beneath the mountain, since the war of the giants. This air brought on a great appetite; we told the guides to light the charcoal for warming the coffee: they hesitatingly said, "it had not been brought; they never expected we could possibly reach the column; the few who thought of trying the ascent in winter generally giving way an hour below." In summer, the spot was a favourite halting place, and, had we ascended a week sooner, could have ridden that far. The coffee had to be taken cold, and was most reviving, instead of getting into the head, like spirits; and I am happy to be able to quote Professor Forbes, who also

preferred tea to wine on his mountain expeditions. The guides brought out bread and oil, of course; for dessert each had one of our cold veal chops, which we found nice solid things, with a little fruit, making a strengthening and not too heavy meal. After the cooling air, refreshment, and rest of an hour, things began to assume quite a different appearance: when two lovely yellow butterflies came and flitted about, eight thousand feet above that sea stretched below, we sprang up and felt as if we would fly also; for surely what butterflies could reach we could!

The "Piano delle Lave" lay stretched out to the "Casa degli Inglesi," the next goal. Angiolo and Georgio were hooked in again, and soon covered with shawls, for when we moved, the wind seemed to disappear, and the heat raged again undisturbed. The snow had now become soft, and at each step we sank in ankle-deep, then almost knee-deep; it was very, very hard work; while that "Montagnuolo," at first so advancing, seemed as if it *would* accompany us, and never let us edge beyond its shoulder; the little "Casa degli Inglesi," instead of increasing in size, remained the same insignificant distant dot; even the lovely appearance of the snow, whose alabaster surface was shaded

into deep sea-green wherever we had stepped, could not charm us into thinking it less heavy than a dry sandy beach. This was another two hours' probation, seeming never to end, and, like the former, to be endured only by one of those efforts which enthusiasm can force now and then in a lifetime,—it felt rewarded when the little roof of the highest placed house in Europe sloped at touching distance above the snow! As the frozen banks prevented the door being opened, I at once seated Mamma comfortably on an icicle, to examine the effects of the last earthquake, which had thrown down the back rooms — then rushed off with Angiolo towards the crater, and was out of reach in a moment!

Up and down the little snow-hills we ran with glee, the good soul being as excited as myself, and not till we came to the ascent of the funnel (of which only a gravel walk outside the dome of St. Paul's can give any idea), did I well understand how that many people who even rode up to the Casa never reached the crater of the mountain. For, reader, Ætna being a pyramid, and towering above all nature within the vast horizon around, the miserable beings on her summit are suspended in the air, and merely cling with a poor little pair

of feet to a few shifting cinders, while all Sicily waits to receive their bones when, giddy-headed, they roll below. Such being the prospect, and the probable result of looking round, it can be imagined that a good head is necessary, as it is impossible, from the steepness, to take more than four steps upwards without stopping; the rarification of the air had not the slightest effect upon us during the whole ascent; poor Italian travellers are quite torn in pieces by it; they either drink "*ruum*" or suck lemons the whole way up. The ground was pleasantly warm beneath our feet, if we did not rest too long; here and there, smoke came from slits in the sulphureous yellow ground, called "Papone del Cratere," giving an awful sensation of hollowness beneath.

Toil, toil, toil; is this to be never-ending? Hark, a sound! it must be Vulcan's anvil preparing Jove's thunder in his crater-forge;—a few more gasps, a few more slips—backwards, forwards, struggles—and inside a great basin of blue and yellow smoke I see distinctly a Cyclop looking up at us! Bewildered and confused, oh! were there but a spot to sit down and think for a moment! No, the edge is crust, and, pressed, will crisply crack into the gulf, where Bronte and

Sterope have already come to their companion's call.

How dizzy being at the summit of one's ambition makes one feel! but we will be queenly as the altitude, and survey with calm the earth beneath. There lies the whole island of Sicily, ocean-bound, three-cornered, ancient Trinacria, "Sol's bright isle," now glowing as it did when the gods were born; its angles rushing into the sea, but stopped and deeply bayed between by the resisting waters. Here to the right are Enna's plains, where Proserpine is playing and Minerva rambling. Down by that sea-shore, close where Diana hunts, Alpheus chases fair Arethusa's charms, and grasps but water; hard by them, Polyphemus will soon place his huge form between Acis and Galatea. Still round the isle we look, and see Mellazzo's rock shading the Oxen of the Sun from ardent heat, and screening the fleet of Regulus the Proud in naval ambush, to bring the Carthaginian, unwittingly sailing past, his first defeat by aid of the terrible grapple. Then on to Tyndaris, which, say the monks, the Crucifixion-earthquake shook into the sea; of all its glory and riches leaving but one crag of rock and some idols, which the loathing waves cast up again, and dashed back upon its

ruined shores. Beyond, lying like birds upon the ocean, are the Æolian isles, whose windy gods blow askance upon the passing Trojan fleet. That great form by Termini, is Hercules resting from his Mediterranean labours. Above that bay, where Palermo nestles, rises ancient Ereta, defended for three years by Hannibal's Carthaginian uncle, Hamilcar, against the Romans. Past that angle stands Trapani's Mount Eryx, where Venus loved to rest in her marble temple, whose priestesses were all beautiful, and that bright cloud perhaps now brings the goddess down with car and doves, to see her hero-son Æneas land and celebrate the funeral games of that father whom he bore from the flames of Troy. Beneath is the battle-field of Pyrrhus. That eagle soaring past lets fall the heavy tortoise from his claws and kills Æschylus as he walks in Terra Nova. Reader, if you have loved mythology and old misty history, all these, and thousand other scenes, will rush to your mind, confused as in a vision. Ætna, who saw them all enacted, will remind you of them, and from the summit still let the climber see the shadows dance.

But now awake! let old things pass, and gaze upon the actual view. A whole island large as a kingdom;

an ocean stretching into space, one with the sky; if any horizon cut between them it is African land—that tiny speck is Malta, a bit of English ground—to the north, a row of dark, audacious mountains run in one long line between two seas and form Calabria. All else is air; you stand alone; a few soft rosy streaks beneath, seeming to lie on the water, tell you are throned above the clouds; clear and spotless immensity your sky.

Now beneath the swimming gaze a change begins: a shadow slowly creeps across the sea, chasing light away, slowly turning gold to grey; the sun is beginning to sink, and the mighty mountain's form is masked in shade, darkening nature's face.

We rise to go, take a last look at the other volcano—Stromboli, King of the Liparis—then descend. I did not care to imitate Empedocles, the philosopher, who, wishing to be thought something extraordinary, jumped into the crater, letting every one believe he had been caught up to the skies, until one day his brass slippers were thrown out (no doubt after the Cyclops blacksmiths had found they were quite worn out and down at heel), and betrayed the whole transaction. The opening is at present three miles in circumference,

but often changes shape; the smoke on a fine clear day is thin as an elegant marabout feather, and though it spread a very little over the edges, does not in the least blind or choke the traveller, and allows him to see the wonder of the crater—snow clinging within its heated sides. Fire there is none; a vapour, gradually increasing in density, and smelling slightly of sulphur, veils the mysteries of the forge beneath. On descending, the guide chose another way, where a hollow allowed the snow to rest, and though we sank up to our knees, were in no danger of falling head-foremost, and also caught a peep of the "Valle del Bove" (Valley of the Ox), so called from its stretching out immediately under the mountain in form of a pair of horns; thus even Ætna has its "Corne," to counteract no doubt the "evil eye" of the Cyclops, who must have been the original "Jettatura." In this valley, which is full of trees and fields, stood a row of what appeared to be heaps of rubbish burning, but were in reality little smoking craters. One of our *savans*, Sir Charles Lyell, had lately spent a week in exploring these curiosities; but when he attempted the great ascent, could never get beyond the Montagnuolo. One fine day, he started with another gentleman, merely to look about the

mountain: a storm came on (so uncertain ever is the weather in that altitude), and they were shut up in one of the caves, without fire or provisions, for nearly a day and a night, till guides sent in all directions by good Dr. Gemelaro found them at last. Even on short excursions future philosophers had better be provided with comforts.

In twenty minutes we were again at the "Casa," having been absent more than an hour; Mamma was able to watch our proceedings the whole time, proving that mountaineers who feel fatigued on arriving at the summit, can see their companions reach the crater without feeling very desolate and solitary. The guide who remained with her would not let her move a step alone, as he said the snow around was fifteen feet deep. The setting sun had turned its alabaster tone to rose-colour; every icicle glowed as it hung over the little hut and wrapped it in liquid fire; the few uncovered lava rocks were soft deep purple; a magic light floated round; and as Ætna's smoke veiled the sun, itself was turned to gold. Scenes of nature, like the scenes of life, how you vary as the light shines on you! What once was cold and dead, now how bright in the sun of happiness! He sinks; all is cold and dead again!

"We must descend," says Angiolo.

"At once? only let me stop to breathe, and change my shoes and stockings." Mamma had done this while I was on the crater, and it is such a comfortable plan no one must neglect to follow it; the nice dry woollen stockings and easy shoes rest one inexpressibly, and make one long to run down. The guides were in tremendous spirits; could hardly believe the whole thing real; half feared to triumph; and fervently thanked Santa Lucia for having so handsomely acknowledged the feast held in her honour the day before, and wound up by saying, "*Ah, Signora, bisogna che questa cosa sia stampata*" ("this must be printed"). Never, never, had they dreamt of taking ladies through such snow; of the very few men who try it hardly one in a winter reaches the forge; only a "giorno di Santa Lucia" could have worked such a miracle, and they ended, I rather suspect, by taking us for very near relations of her holiness; perhaps one for herself.

We all set off quickly down, as if it were only a run to Catania; but found even to the lava beacon was a respectable distance, and were glad of another rest there; the guides only allowed it to be a very short one; the sole fault in this

miraculous weather was, not being full-moon time; we should soon be dependent entirely on the Milky-way, and the short twilight was fast fading.

Up! for another run as far as the outside shoulder of the Montagnuolo. We began to find the descent of a mountain has also its difficulties. Our knees were commencing to bend, and feel sadly tried by this new exertion. We endeavoured, as much as possible, to place our feet in the old steps, as it saved fatigue; the guides were bent on keeping the same path, that they might find a shawl dropped on going up;—here, reader, I will remind you of a homely, but useful habit; always to knot your wraps together when taking them off, as, thrown carelessly across the arm, they are sure to drop, and you can ill afford to lose anything in travelling. We soon required all our coverings again; the missing one was not retraced, and should a future Ætnean mountaineer find it drifted in some corner, and preserved by the pure air, he must keep it in remembrance of his piloteeress.

Down, down we went, over and under hillocks of snow, an interminable descending journeying, which made us wonder how we ever got up; and I have often remarked the descent of mountains gives a better idea of their height than the ascent, as

then one is so carried on by enthusiasm and novelty, that distances are unremarked.

It was now quite night, and though the stars did their best by all coming out in full brightness, so that there seemed to be hardly room in the sky for them, and the small spaces between were filled with a dusky light, which allowed to divine at worlds beyond, yet it was almost dark: we were merely saved from actual blackness by the pure white snow refusing to be sullied by the night, and letting us just perceive the way beneath each foot.

Another hour, and then commenced a really disagreeable part of the expedition. The snow, touched by cold evening air, had hardened into ice; the thousand little shining drops which had glittered in the sun, were now tiny icicles, innumerable as animalculæ, and slippery as a slide; we none of us could keep our feet, and were continually stumbling, falling, rolling down. It was of no use planting the long stick firmly before; it refused to stay; it was of no use taking the guides' arms, they fell too; and to go all in a row, was only to fall four together, instead of two and two; this part was very wretched, and most dangerous; any slip might have snapped a leg or arm, and they

would not allow us to put on the "craponi," or iron-spiked shoes, saying we might fall on some lava,—though I saw none, and think they would have been a great help. How long this misery lasted I cannot say, it seemed interminable. The utter helplessness, the hour, the jaded feeling, all made themselves heavily felt; and when at length we were within hailing distance of the spot where the mules were left—that land of promise held out by the guides,—and *no* response came to their loud hails, we sank into despair.

Silence sleeping in the glade alone was waked by their lusty cries, which died and dwindled down as their hearts misgave them. We tried to ramble through the wood, till a few smouldering embers beneath a tree showed where the mules had been. Our hopes extinguished like them, we threw ourselves down alongside, and felt we were left to die in the forest.

With rest came thought. "Ha, no!" said Angiolo, "we will not let you die; Georgio stops with you, while I skirt about and see if the receding mules have left any other traces by which we can direct ourselves, or divine the reason of their disappearance." After an absence of some time he returned speechless. We rose, movement of any

kind was better than suspense in the stillness of the night, with a towering mountain above us. How awful it appeared then! huge white ghost. Shudderingly we shuffled on in the downward direction, over lava rocks far apart, into creeping brushwood, down slippery crevices, into dust. Oh, stinging agony, now the feat was over, and we had thought to mount and ride in triumph.

We must not faint—fatigue and cold will never let us breathe again—but yet for *insensibility!* to benumb our feelings, rest our minds one moment; when "Santa Lucia!" screamed they; "a light was in the wood."

"But is it banditti?" trembled we.

No! their hail is answered in a young muleteer's voice; their joy bursts out in loud halloos.

A fire, a bed of straw—*security*—hour of peace, thy balm was Gilead's.

The wretched man, it seems, finding it getting late, and rather cold at the appointed spot, after burning all the charcoal (the very same which was to have heated our coffee at the summit), instead of lighting another fire with the brushwood, thought he would move to a more comfortable place, and had ensconced himself in a little thatched cabin he had managed to fill with smoke; with a view, I

suppose, of smoke-drying us as specimens on our return. An outside fire was lighted in a twinkling, and round it we lay reposing, soothed by delightful sounds of all the Sicilian fury of the guides being vented on the treacherous muleteer. When they had done, they came and tenderly watched over us, taking off our wet shoes and socks, and warming our feet with their own silk handkerchiefs.

Once mounted again, all fatigue seemed lulled, and the only lantern having been broken by the mule's fall in the snow in the morning (mind, next traveller, you take two), enormous straw torches from the hut lighted us, and seemed at every spark as if they would ignite the whole carpet of dried fern and grass. Soon the supply began to diminish; we agreed to trot on in the dark, that we might have enough left to enter Nicolosi in flaring style, which we did after two hours more, having been absent seventeen hours, from six o'clock in the morning till eleven at night, thirteen of which were passed in the snow; yet, when we had alighted from the mules, entered the little parlour, and drunk a bowl of milk, I can truly say we did not feel one tenth part of that fagged sensation a good day's shopping gives in a noisy town; and on rising next morning, after an excellent night's rest,

and a cup of coffee, should have been sorry to exchange our sensations for those following a crowded ball, even had half of it been spent sitting on the stairs.

Fresh and in spirits, the fiddles and flutes of the peasants in the next room made music which piped with our feelings, and notwithstanding several "Centaurs" from H.M.S. of that name, had lost all the skin from their faces in their ascent a month previously, our complexions were untouched, though they may be reasonably supposed to be more delicate than that of a sea-captain; the nice doubled blue veils had quite preserved them. So, adventurous young ladies, fear not to follow our steps. We could dance now to the tune of "Bella Montagna" they are playing without, were we not busy receiving a levee of people, headed by sly Dr. Gemelaro, who declares "he only believes we have been up, because the guides say so." * The Cancelliere brings a poem on the subject, written by his pretty daughter after she had finished her "Aves" for our safety. As Donna Caterina is only fifteen years of age, and has magnificent eyes, per-

* Notwithstanding his insinuations we put down a piastre on his subscription list towards repairing the Casa degli Inglesi, as it is chiefly used by our country-people; and if two hundred others do the same, it can be made habitable again.

haps her little ode may be interesting; her father's sole pleasure at that retired spot is to cultivate her mind, and she forms a charming exception to the general female ignorance.

L' ASCENSIONE DELL' ÆTNA.

Bella Inglese pregai, e il prego mio,
Che il cor dettommi con verace affetto
Accolse bene d'Israello il Dio;

E un bel Sole spuntò a un sol suo detto,
Che diè in puro Ciel luce, e calore,
Del vecchio Verno a marcio suo dispetto.

Bando dunque al timor, ti assoanca il core,
L' Etna ascendi quale tu volevi,
Che al tuo desio consenti il Signore.

Ti sia dolce l' algor, ti sian lievi
Le Cure nel salir sull' arduo Monte,
Cui cuopre il giaccio e copiose nevi.

Immenso tu vedrai vasto orizzonte,
Cui non arriva vista disarmata.
E di Leonzio l' ammirabil Fonte,

E Nissa, e Gela, ed Ibla, e l' infamata
Enna, e Agosta, vedrai, e Siracusa,
D' Eol la Reggia, dal Trojano odiata

Sotto starsi al tuo pie, che al fin l' astrusa
Cima salisce dell' ignivo Monte
Immensa bragia nèl cui ventre è chiusa.

Sterope griderai, uscite, e Bronte,
Sicchè dal labbro vostro veritiero
Tue meraviglie al vero sianmi conte.

Ma una voce udrai, "vano è il pensiero
Dell' ardito mortal qualor si attente
Svelar cio che di Dio chiude il mistero."

Nicolosi appi è dell' Etna, 15 Decembre.
CATERINA C———.

Melli, the most popular poet Sicily has had for centuries, died a few years since; his pastorals are sprightly and fascinating.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE JOURNEY TO SYRACUSE.

HANGING ABOUT FOR THIRTY-SIX HOURS—THE FASHIONABLE CAFFÈ — MODERN INFERNO AND PURGATORIO — FAREWELL TO THE MONK—A NYMPH TURNED INTO STYX—THE TOMB OF ARCHIMEDES—EUREKA—AN HEIRESS—ACCOMMODATION.

THE thirty-six hours we waited in Catania for the "Posta" were much alleviated by discovering an establishment called "Caffè Siciliano," situated on the large square opposite the lava elephant bearing a car on his back, and which makes a most curious sketch, requiring such patience, that one forgets the post's delay when engrossed in giving a right twist to the trunk, and bend to the tusks. As the Caffè proprietors keep a veteran retired beggar on purpose to beat off the rising generation of mendicants, who are reduced to looking through the windows, the comfort of the retreat is very great. It contains everything in the butter, egg, coffee, chocolate, and cake line, nicely served; fresh milk comes in the morning, supplied by a flock of goats; the herdsman milks it into little cans in

the open square, and sells them to the people breakfasting. Other flocks stand in various parts of the town, arriving at daybreak, and in the evening; thus all Sicilian towns are supplied with milk, a picturesque method, but a drop is never by any chance to be had in the daytime. The Caffè also sent roast fowls and other things to the Hotel Ætna, making us independent of the Furies, who were not used to cooking, and only had some fire in a cupboard. Sicilian travellers order in their meals, or make their servants prepare them over their own braziers.

After keeping us waiting a day and a half, not daring to undress or unpack in case of a surprise, the Posta made its appearance. Remarking to the fagged officials upon the heinousness of the government letting an island, which contributed fifteen millions to the treasury, be without bridges, they said, "*Ha! la signora credeva di venire in Paradiso qui, e invere si trova nel inferno! ove almeno nel purgatorio, perchè si sarà forse un fine.*" * Then proceeding without delay to install us inside, that another great river on the road might

* "The Signora thought she was coming into a paradise here, instead of which she finds herself in *inferno;* or at least in purgatory, as there may be an end to it."

be crossed before dusk—the whip was cracking, and the first jerk was coming—when, a minute's delay—our Nicolosi monk appeared at the window with a beautiful little coral basket he had worked, and said, "Farewell!"

Off to Syracuse! the town through which the most interesting of scientific old fogies ran about calling "Eureka!" But first there is a difficulty to get over caused by one of Juno's jealous fits; the river Giaretta, once the lovely nymph Thalia, now doomed to flow between two banks of mud whose depth and quality must effectually repel Jove's advances, unless like us he were carried over them on his Mercury's shoulders, then instead of a pretty lady-like fountain he would but find a sulky looking male-river, which on the slightest aggravation from the clouds irritably swamps the fields around. Juno's vengeance is complete. The passengers were carried "a cavallo" (on horseback) one by one, on bare-legged peasants' shoulders, to a boat, ferried over, shouldered again, and finally deposited in a post-carriage in waiting on the opposite shore. This pretty process was just over by daylight. The constant "Styx" work at all the rivers should be a warning to travellers never to take a private carriage unless they can be sure

there has been no recent rain: parties who let themselves be talked over by innkeepers and their coachmen, deserve to be obliged to return like one we saw in a vehicle piled with luggage, which had only come for a little trip from Naples to the east coast. The government conveyances should always be preferred in a difficult country; those who are too fine for that mode of travelling are certainly out of place in Sicily. The accompanying corriére was a gentleman of such intelligence and classic knowledge, that we could not help expressing some astonishment, and found he had been intended for the bar; but the government, faithful to its principles of allowing no person of superior talent, unless a devoted servant, to follow that profession, forced him to accept an employment requiring no head, giving him besides a three years' composing draught of imprisonment.

The rising moon kindly let the interesting objects of the road be seen. On one of the little hills edging the Catanian plain, still stands a tower built by Roger the Norman; and as the next river we came to had a bridge, of course it was of Saracenic work. Lentini's lake then began to appear, with its sedgy banks twenty-four miles in circumference, supplying the whole of Italy with eels, a prince with a colossal

T. Picken, lith. Routledge, Warne & Routledge London & New York Day & Son, Chromolith to the Queen

TOMB OF ARCHIMEDES — SYRACUSE.

fortune, and the province with "mal-aria;" all petitions to drain the swampy edges, and make it a clean, respectable lake, having been counteracted by the proprietor's influence. The peasants have taken refuge on the various little hill-tops, but the vapours rise and poison them there; their ghastly appearance in Lentini and Carlentini (the latter was built by Charles Quint) speaks of their sufferings and ague. This lake concludes the list of what the Sicilians consider the three wonders of the island before mentioned.

All the hills are now passed, the country around gets flat and dull, the moon's light brings out no feature, throws no shadow, till a low ridge of rocks appears on the wayside. Separate at first, they afterwards join and wall in the road; dividing again, the openings show others cutting through the grassy plain. Where the moon strikes full upon them cavities appear boring their dull sides; for miles they stand monotonously continuing, till the coach pulls up, and—

"That is the tomb of Archimedes," says Don Gregorio; "he lay in one of those top-heavy rocky piles which cower in the moonlight."

"Shall we walk up to it?"

"Yes;" and bending beneath a roughly hewn

door, a faint streak of light let us in dimness see several small arches, just large enough for one poor body. In the second row of these, Cicero found an urn, whose sepulchral stone was marked for epitaph with triangle and sphere.

Another mile of tombs and Syracuse's door is reached, placed there and portcullised by Charles Quint, who fortified the town. Being thirty-six hours (without the extra Styx) behind time, the gates were shut, the governor asleep, and we outside for an hour, till he was roused to look at the passports and send the key; private carriages are never admitted after six o'clock; the government conveyances alone break the midnight silence of those streets whose forefathers once echoed to "Eureka." Don Gregorio and the other passenger, a gentleman who lived on Ætna in a town called by his name, did not leave us till they had seen us received into a most comfortable inn; even at that hour of night, making arrangements about charges, and giving injunctions which only the most thoughtful kindness could suggest; then saying good-bye, they continued their journey to Noto, a Capo di provincia I never heard of anybody visiting, though an heiress with £3,000 a-year had recently been discovered there.

"Te Sole" was the name of the inn, whose cleanliness would do credit to any country, but was quite incomprehensible in Sicily; even the entrance was tidy, and the dining-room quite rural in the whiteness of its linen. Within the house was a restaurant who attended to the cooking department, and gave us meals of English goodness and purity, showing how capable the Sicilians are of civilisation and improvement when they are encouraged; as more travellers go for mere pleasure to Syracuse than any other town. Those who wish to rest and reflect awhile in the island, will find it the best place, being tranquil, and having walks of interest in the neighbourhood. They must not forget to ask for the "Syracusan muscat wine," a favourite with the Italians, and by whom, it is said, it has been all drunk, and no fresh made for years, on account of the grape failure; the imitation is so good it does quite as well.

CHAPTER XIV.

SYRACUSE.

THE CATHEDRAL TEMPLE OF MINERVA—THE HARBOURS—THE CATACOMBS OF SAN GIOVANNE—THE ALTAR OF JUPITER—THE GREEK THEATRE AND ROMAN AMPHITHEATRE—THE EAR OF DIONYSIUS—STATE PRISONS—THE FOUNTAIN OF ARETHUSA—SILVER SANTA LUCIA AND HER CEREMONIES.

BEFORE breakfast there is time to look at the neighbouring cathedral, which has stood 2,500 years as a temple for the worshippers of the protectress of the Syracusans, beginning with Minerva, and ending with Santa Lucia. The spaces between the massive pillars which had formed the open temple of the ancient goddess, are now filled up with plaster outside; inside a second row of modern columns were being covered with crimson hangings and tinsel flowers, in honour of the modern one, who stood upon the altar. The edifice was full of carpenters; a priest, and a young school in priestly dress were directing their movements, and we were told to return in the evening.

For the few spare moments, reader, while the

breakfast cloth is laying, climb up with me to the belvidere of the "Sole," and looking beyond the dull roofs, where sit like pussy-cats the inhabitants of the Syracuse of to-day, see where stood Acradina, Tica, Neapoli, Ortygia, four towns, each with their hundreds of thousands of moving beings; of the former alone are any stones standing, and they are tombstones.

After your meal, step into this boat, and let us cross the great harbour where navies floated, aye, and had room to swell their sails—now it is half filled with mud—a British dredging machine stands there alone.

Yet there is no reason why Sicily, placed 'mid oceans, the meeting point from Italy, Africa, the East, should not be throned on industry, and sparkle with the bright products she might pass from east to west, from north to south, leaving part of their riches clinging to her aiding hands. Her rulers, more cruel than her Carthage conquerors (who never let a Syracusan live in Ortygia's town, lest the maritime views should kindle his naval genius), have suppressed all genius, treated it as madness—let it be self-consuming—what has the Syracusan now to do but breathe mal-aria with summer heat, and in winter die?

Arrived across, we will land upon a grassy bank, take the little lane opposite which leads straight to La Capella di San Giovanni, ring the neighbouring monastery bell, and peep through the chinks of the door at the garden planted 'midst rocks as in a quarry, while a friar approaches. He knows his work, takes a torch and key, opens the chapel door, and descends to a holy place, the first in Europe used for Christian worship, round whose altar, for thirty years after our Lord's death, the trembling early Christians said their prayers, till the heathen came, and dragging one from among them, beat him to death by that granite pillar. Marcius was his name, and he has left it to the chapel. The rest fled beneath the ground, and dwelt among the dead; these catacombs received them; as wild beasts they lived in dens and caves of the earth, the light of heaven coming through those same holes which, gaping above, show our path through open graves scooped in the rock, with here and there a little dust, or some chips of terra cotta, which once closed the entrance; the small holes are for children, the large for their parents; in this circular room with caves all round lay a family; this is all the variety. We go on and on; silence, caves, and dust; generations have been here, and left no name,

no date, to mark one beyond the other. Follow the friar—thread on; his torch, though reeking, guides you right; how bounds the heart when a ray of real light comes through a gap! Yet what thousands of beings glowing with life and health lived, yea dwelt here, rather than deny their God. In this day how hard it is to make a sacrifice to religion; what an inward struggle to suppress resentment at ill breeding, to forgive an insult to vanity—we are refined indeed! Was not their life, honour dearer than life, their every bodily, mental, feeling, with nerve-tearing suspense, their daily sacrifice? had our lot been cast in early Christian days, and slow torture before us, should we have been martyrs, or renegades?—could we only ask this inwardly, when the next temptation comes—only that will be so cunningly, we shall be almost entangled in it before finding it out, showing how dull we are with all our brightness. But here is daylight, and the real sky above! Gloomy thoughts, stay in the catacombs below! We feel almost equal to meeting Apollyon himself.

On going out, "Look," the friar says, "at this beautiful white marble pillar, turning green with damp; a bequest was left to the monastery on purpose to repair the chapel; we, the guardians, have never received a farthing of it."

"Poor man! we can't begin a radical reform, but here are a few tari for you."

"Thank you, signora. Keep up the broad road at the end of the lane, and you will come to the Altar of Jupiter."

This altar was used by the Greeks to offer to their Jove ere they commenced the performance in the neighbouring theatre, magically situated on rising ground, and whose low circling seats (where Cicero and Plato must have sat) and short square stage, peep in rich sandstone colour through luxuriant green creepers, which wall them round, the centre being kept clear. I hope, as there was no covering, the plays were recited in the cool of the evening, as even in the month of December it was too hot to sit in the sun, and the vegetation appeared not in the least affected by the season. The "Ara," some twenty paces off, raised upon three steps, must have been a short pillar on which merely to offer up some light little sacrifice. It stands in a perfect garden of laurustina and sweet-smelling shrubs, making one long to be a priestess, to trim and offer them to Flora. To-day,

> "Not gold, not blood, this altar dowers,
> But votive tears and symbol flowers."

Now turn and walk on some yards—beneath stands the amphitheatre, where Roman eyes drank

in streams of human blood, and watched their captives' life expire, as that of the fish on their supper-tables. Inside it is constructed like the Colosseum at Rome, but infinitely smaller, and the exterior walls are all but level with the ground.

Hasten on: Greek theatres, Roman amphitheatres can be seen elsewhere; but that wonder, the "Ear of Dionysius"—at Syracuse alone. Winding down and down, one reaches monstrous tufa rocks, caved and hollowed inside. From the roofs hang what would be columns, but, ceasing a few feet from the ground, form gigantic stalactites of stone. Following the crescent of their fronts, *one* alone stands caved to the height of a lofty cathedral-tower, but in the form of an ear—a human ear. To enter this huge unnatural slit is horrible. Once in the dark interior, space seems to have disappeared; darkness, echo, exist alone. Here, it is said, Dionysius kept his political prisoners, and went to a cave above, to listen if some secret escaped them in their grief or wild complaints.

For a tyrant's prison, ransack earth and you will find nought to compare with "Dionysius' Ear;" but on climbing to the tyrant's loophole, when more than one voice wailed below, I could dis-

tinguish no separate sound; confused rolling echoes alone ascended. Also the pathway to it has been constructed but a few years—formerly travellers were pulled up by cords. Thus it seems singularly ill-adapted for a ruler's listening purposes, though most likely used to hurl vengeance of some kind on those walking in darkness below. Evidently the name "Ear" is from the form of the entrance, now guarded by a low wall, a small door in which happened to be open; and the firing of a gun within, just as we crossed the threshold, was as being caught in the blasting of some dark mine. Presently issued out two Italian gentlemen with a "custode," the first of that species we had seen, having wandered midst all these wondrous things delightfully alone, letting them tell their own story. The remainder of the caves were used for spinning ropes, and as we went by, their denizens sprang out like foxes upon geese; but, finding there were no pickings to be had, retired to their holes. The centre of this gigantic crescent is filled by other rocks of various form, now interspersed with vegetation, but also once used for prisons; on the loftiest was placed the watchman.

Sitting down to essay a sketch, only a small streak of sky could be seen by looking with break-

neck efforts upwards; and while puzzling over the new subject, and trying to express the elegance of the pendent shrubs, which, growing in the rock, seemed trying to clothe and hide the monuments of human cruelty, for the whole has been man's work, —suddenly a friendly Syracusan voice addressed us: it was the gentleman to whom we had brought a letter of introduction, and who had left a "Pique-Nique" at a friend's casino on the receipt of it. He was so disappointed at hearing we had seen everything, that he wished to make us go over all again; but we consoled him by reminding him there was still the fountain of Arethusa to visit. He also comforted us exceedingly by telling us the tyrant Dionysius ended his days as an usher at a Corinthian school. We fervently hoped it was a "Squeers" establishment. He also said that Cicero, whom the Sicilians always quote as a great quiz, and sometimes boaster, was tremendously amused at his playing out his part of tyrant to his life's end over little boys. Another Dionysius (for some time all the rulers had the same name, like so many Pharaohs) was the inventor of that famous sword which has done so much service to literature and eloquence in the way of comparison, simile, etc. —the "sword of Damocles," which was contrived

to hang by a hair over the head of that flatterer, who found it out at the banquet terminating the day's reign Dionysius had allowed him to have, to prove the precariousness of ruling. The Damocles of the present day would be seated on exploding bombshells.

Don Vicenzo walked back with us to Syracuse, past the tombs, round which browsed the goats, while yellow evening crept over the distant town, of which I tried to take a melancholy sketch.

A steep street led to Arethusa's premises. That lovely nymph is now a cistern built in between four walls, and surrounded by washerwomen in the daytime. Those who wish to see the original fountain must look through an opening left in the masonry for peepers, and they will find the clear water coming from the rock, half hid by hanging mosses, once the drapery of Arethusa, clothing it as gracefully as that did her fair limbs in life. It was night; no desecrating hand stirred the waters; her Alpheus' self might have come and seen his face reflected in the bosom of his limpid nymph. He too is now a stream, and rises some miles off upon the sea, fresh amidst the saltness, pursuing her from Greece, and bringing flowers and fruit; even cups of gold which have been thrown in at his

source, he bears along to offer to his love; but his strength gives way against the waves of the shore, he rises and dies in sweet waters, midst their briny spray.

Don Vicenzo said we now had seen all the curiosities of Syracuse. For those who wish deep explanations, there is a professional guide who accompanies travellers to the ruins — quite a gentleman in brigand-hat and cloak, and who has a museum of antiquities, with a Venus of Phidias, but without a head, perhaps an Anne Boleyn of her day.

Turning sharp up Arethusa Lane, the Piazza flashed upon us with a thousand lamps; the Minerva Cathedral was a perfect constellation of luminaries. In and out of its portals pressed a crowd; we entered; the crimson, the gold, the silver, glittered and glowed to the light of countless wax candles in crystal chandeliers, of which the last was just being slowly wound up midst the cheers and hurrahs of dense masses. Santa Lucia stood on Minerva's altar, arrayed in a ball-dress; her silver face and arms, polished up, looked better by artificial than by pure day-light. When the organ pealed its tones, it for one moment swelled, then sunk midst sounds of rising ecstasy from the

excited crowd. There they stood, full of ardent feeling, uncultivated, in filthy rags, made the slaves of their church by the very gorgeousness of a spectacle which was drained from their sustenance. Next day they would all pour into the country, whither the saint was to be borne, to remain a fortnight at a neighbouring church, where legends say she suffered martyrdom as a lowly maid. The presents of jewels and gold constantly received by these favourite saints (like the Queen of Spain's Virgin of Atocha), and passing through them into the possession of religious communities, would form a sum far more than sufficient to cleanse and educate permanently the whole country. They have more rings than can be put on their fingers; crowns of every shape; ornaments enough to crush them; and worst of all, so many rich dresses that they get shabby and old-fashioned without being worn. The better classes of Sicilian gentlemen say, "We were used to the gods, so the saints followed in the order of succession;" and they quote many of the popular songs to prove that their deities have only changed their names:—for instance, might not the Goddess of Beauty once have reigned over the following?—

"O Maria!
Quando naceste voi, nacque bellezza:
* * * * *
La Neve vi donò la sua bianchezza;
La Rosa vi donò l' suo bel golore;
La Maddalena le sue bionde treccie;
Cupidò v' insegnò tirar i cori!"

"O Maria!
Beauty and thee were born together:
* * * * *
Snow-flakes lent thy skin soft fairness;
The Rose threw its blush o'er thy cheek;
The Magdalen gave thee her golden tresses;
Cupid taught thee to steal hearts!"

Next morning I was looking from the Belvedere at the gigantic appearance of the steamer midst the seven small fishing-boats of the harbour, and watching the rich decorations which were being spread upon all the houses where the saintly procession was to pass, when Ætna's white top nodded through the clouds. I instantly returned her bow, and flew to persuade Mamma to go immediately on board the steamer.

CHAPTER XV.

VOYAGE BACK TO CATANIA.

THE SCENERY OF THE COAST—EXCITEMENT IN CATANIA—FEAST OF THE MOTHER OF THE MADONNA—EXPLOSIONS—A WARM BATH IN SICILIAN STYLE—AN EARTHQUAKE—AN ERUPTION.

FROM Syracuse to Catania is a beautiful voyage of three hours, past Agusta, which became an island-town in the irruption of 1693; so they have been obliged to build bridges there. The mountains towards Messina at times peep out; that headland which stands its ground so gracefully is Taormina —an excursion in store. Arrived at Catania, we were surprised and rather shocked, being in touring garb, at finding the streets full of smart carriages, whose occupants were arrayed in every exaggeration of Parisian finery, and tried to hide ourselves behind the porter who carried our two modest little bags to the Caffè Siciliano, where we meant to refresh ourselves before getting a carriage to Nicolosi. With great difficulty he steered across the large Piazza, which was completely shut in by a square of something between curl-papers and

chevaux de frise, mounted upon an iron rail, and round and round which the smart carriages were driving. In a second all was in flames, with a tremendous exploding noise! Breathless and half-scorched, we rushed into the caffè. "What can this be?" "Oh, signora! do you not know it is the festa of the immaculate conception of the Madonna? those are the crackers in her honour." And surely before the paper and smoke had dispersed, a figure appeared carried aloft, followed by ermined prelates and purple-robed priests. That was the Immaculate Mother of the Madonna, Santa—— I do not remember the name; but as the sun shone on her wooden countenance and gaudy dress, and I thought what a simple woman the mother of our modest Virgin Mary must have been, the outrage was too great. If her holy daughter see below, O! may a cherub's wing, spreading before her sweet face, hide the hideous doll the poor Sicilians now bow down to . . . . .

She has passed; the gay carriages turn round again; every cab in the town is taken—to walk on such a day would be a wound to vanity. Then the rich adjourn to the opera, the poor to their spectacle within the decorated cathedral. By seven o'clock, carriages are plentiful.

The drive up to Nicolosi, in company of the stars of heaven, felt inexpressibly soothing.

"MIDNIGHT is in the heavens!
The planets of the air,
To her as vassals given,
Wander and worship there.
No sound comes from her throne,
Piled in those lofty skies,
Calmly she broods upon
Her own sweet mysteries."*

The tourists, whose gun had startled us in the "Ear of Dionysius," were going to Messina; so we had arranged to make one party, and on descending to Catania, after the ascent of Ætna, stopped at the "Corona" where they were staying, and whose staircase was then cleared of the ophthalmic crowd. The proprietor appeared so anxious we should remain, that, after arrangements with the head waiter, who acts the master and is inclined to be exorbitant, they showed us nice apartments, and served a very good meal. They also promised never again to turn the house into a hospital, and I can recommend it as immeasurably superior to that of the Furies. The carriage to Messina (a sixty miles' journey done in two days) was to be charged twelve piastres; the

* Aubrey Spencer, Bishop of Jamaica.

natives pay two piastres a day, besides the coachman's living and half-return fare.

Having ordered a warm bath to be ready at eight o'clock, at that hour three men entered the room bearing a pedestal, an oblong tin, and a large charcoal fire. When the tin was fixed on the pedestal, the fire was placed in a can at one end, then cold water was poured in till the bath was full, and which the charcoal was expected to heat. This proved the slowest and most round-about process imaginable; the men would have stirred the water near the fire with their hands, without our decided objection to such spoons; but we were obliged to do it ourselves, or it would not have warmed equally, and we stood over the cauldron for an hour, wondering what incantations were used to persuade water to simmer—when two or three graceful heavings of the earth beneath, with a slight "boaty" sensation, and a very gentle swing of the lamp, showed us an earthquake upon a harmless scale, quite *à l'aimable*. Alas! it had not been such in Calabria; it was but the fag-end of that fearful convulsion, which there tore the roofs off thousands of habitations.

Once in bed, fatigue made us sleep. At dead of night came a burst, a continuous exploding, as

of besieging musketry—the town was roused—"is Ætna in flames?" "No, travellers, return to rest; it is the midnight salute to the Madonna and her sacred Mother; the pious have subscribed for a thousand squibs to explode every night at the same hour, until the Nativity."

CHAPTER XVI.

JOURNEY TO MESSINA.

THE BAY OF ULYSSES—ACIS AND GALATEA—PHŒBUS' SHEEP—THE "CHESTNUT OF A HUNDRED HORSES"—THE OLDEST TREE IN THE WORLD—FUDGE—A HITCH IN THE JOURNEY—AGGRAVATING SIMPLICITY—CONSOLING BEAUTIES AND SPLENDOURS OF THE COAST—CUSTOM-HOUSES.

WITH the dawn we were off, and ere the sun had fully risen, were passing the Bay of Ulysses, in whose pellucid waters still stand the Lava Isles, hurled at his departing ship by the malignant Cyclopes. Mid-day brought us to Riposto, the scene of another stone-throwing of one of the same naughty monsters, Polyphemus, and which so disturbed the loves of poor Acis and Galatea, who roved through these very olive groves, and tended the great-grannies of those merino sheep now grazing among them. Talking of sheep, at little Fiume di Nisi, sly Eurylochus stole Phœbus'.

Now came a provoking thing in the journey. Dinner was to be at Giarra, and while that meal was preparing, we were to visit the *Castagna di*

Cento Cavalli, so called because a hundred horses at once could find shade under its branches—the oldest tree in the world. The gentleman had a letter to a judge, Don Cicero, who mounted us on mules; he was particularly quiet-looking for an Italian, but had spirit enough when I was remonstrating upon the national cruelty they showed in putting a saddle on a galled animal, to answer, "You see the Italians do not treat mankind with cruelty, as you English ladies do."

We mounted (not the rubbed animal), and thought it would be merely a pleasant little ramble to the tree which I wish had not been "spared," as the expedition occupied five hours through the roughest lanes, at the end of which the hero-tree was reduced to four old stumps, without a branch or leaf. "Look," said the guide, "these once joined, and the hollow in the middle was a fruit house:" now a lane divides them; two on one side, and two on the other; and if they ever really joined, as they say the root is one, must have made a growing leviathan, as wide round as a good-sized grass plat in front of an old-fashioned country-house. Chestnut-trees thrive here; in another field is one called *Castagna delle Nave,* with an immense oblong trunk, and bearing fruit at the

present moment; but as for the "Cento Cavalli," it is audacious of it setting up for a lion, and ought to be labelled "Fudge." Tired, shaken to pieces, we returned to Giarra, one only consolatory reflection being, that you, reader, may escape the same pitfall, unless fond of doing things for opposition's sake, when you will deserve to fall into it and the results.

After dining in an extraordinary apartment, merely divided from the street by an *al fresco* kitchen, the gentlemen were ordering the carriage, when the coachman refused to drive through the darkness, and only the most awful threats made him set off. He got on very well for some miles, when a sudden feeling of sinking in sand, and furious lashing of the horses, at once told we were in the bed of a torrent. There are about thirty between Catania and Messina, without bridges; and they had just been triumphantly crossed by a charmingly spirited young couple, Sir Robert and Lady Emily P——, who were, however, caught in the last, and obliged to wait at "La Scaletta," or the little Staircase, a usual name for miserably inaccessible villages. This torrent was an extra one; the coachman, cross at being forced on, had come without lights, and driven off the high road into

it, perhaps unwittingly. However, once in, the horses would not move: for hours they were alternately coaxed, whipped, and changed places, each being unharnessed in turn, to find out if he were the mutinous one; as in Sicily the animals are subject to dreadful fits of obstinacy (very unlike the inhabitants), and that is the reason they give for galloping them so furiously up hill, as we had often witnessed in the mail, not to give them time to think of stopping at the bottom.

A relieving angel, in the guise of a good-natured laundress, happened to pass at a distance, escorted by a lantern; she was pounced upon and carried off so suddenly, she must have fancied herself a Sabine among Romans. Though no money would induce her to sell her light, she let her boy go as far as the next village to get some church candles from the priest. After a dreamy time he returned, saying that gentleman was quite out of them, and we were just thinking of roosting for the night in the carriage, when another Vetturino came past, and lent his horses, who, as they were returning home, made no difficulty about pulling out the vehicle, and taking it a considerable distance along the road; then returning for their own calash, ours were put in again, and could not

for shame refuse to continue. So we returned to Giarra, and were still more aggravated by the uncivilisation of the poor hostess, who actually asked, "Will you have a room for four?" It was not till various sleeping victims had been sacrificed on the brick floor, that the irritation of the party was soothed. Next morning before daybreak we were roused up again; but alas! by this unfortunate fit of brute obstinacy, were to forego the pleasure of stopping at ancient Taurominium, now Taormina, and climbing that blue promontory we saw when sailing from Syracuse; as one of the party was obliged to be in Messina in the evening. Of course we thought we had missed "the finest thing in Sicily."

But who could pout long where Daphnis sang his bucolics! Virgil a pastoral! and while crossing the ground Diana's foot had pressed as she

> "Blew an inspiring strain,
> The hunter's call, to faun and dryad known."

Already Aci Reale and Aci Castello were stepping from the morning mist down by the sea-shore, and the road-side rocks of marble were caressed by such flowing creepers, even a Cyclops would have paused ere he tore so sweet an embrace asunder. The growing light brought new beauties out—the olive

waved, the tall oleander held its roseate buds on high, the waters laved the brilliant rocks bearing our winding road, which would first ascend their steep sides, and pass through some graceful arch by a projecting castle, such as Alessio, standing like a fair statue reflected in the sea: then it would descend into the thick verdure of vales fair as Tempe's, where the bees hummingly searched their morning meal: above all were countless mountains of changing form, dyed in every rich southern hue, rising to the clouds whose soft swan's-down arms clung around their graceful summits: the air was full of classic sweetness. To speak of the scene, O, had I but the magician's language of joy, where the consonants dance, the vowels sing, the grammar is a feast!—now in front stands Taormina; her slopes still yield Hyblean honey, her amphitheatre gives the last view of Ætna, her position perfects the loveliness around . . . . . At this point, O coast of Sicily,—Venus of Nature! claim the apple—you must surpass all else in earthly beauty! Calabria may frown in dark hilly jealousy opposite—take the prize, your charms are doubled by your ethereal veil of blue!

At Figaro we dined very pleasantly after passing Giardini, which was to have been our last night's

resting-place at the foot of Taormina. Approaching Messina, numberless beautiful little Madonna chapels peeped out among the trees, festooned with brilliant oranges, and here and there a fur-clad pastor playing his pipes fervently before her image. Wax "Bambini" (babies representing our Saviour), beautifully dressed and laid on laced cushions, were handed in at the carriage windows by young children, who received a few tornesi for their industry and taste. A still more certain proof of an approaching town were the custom-houses, of which the officers quietly came out and asked "if we were inclined to give anything, or should they make search?" A couple of tari quite satisfied them; and I often wonder the English can be so foolish as to give a piastre or more to Neapolitan custom-house officers, as they are but too glad to receive any trifle and be saved trouble into the bargain. Ten miles further on, more black-mail was demanded; but we did not grumble, as these, and a man stationed at every torrent-bed in case of need, were the only beggars.

It was too dark to see Scylla; but Charybdis' waves made themselves heard upon the shore rather angrily, saying, "You are at Messina."

CHAPTER XVII.

MESSINA.

THE STREETS IN CHRISTMAS GARB—TREATMENT OF THE MONARCH'S STATUE—THE HOTEL—VALUE OF ENGLISH BANK NOTES—AN ADVENTURE WITH ENGLISH PEOPLE—THE OPERA—DRESS—LETTER FROM THE VIRGIN MARY—THE BARA—THE SENATE—THE REVOLUTION—THE NEIGHBOURHOOD—ROMANTIC RUINS—ATROCITIES OF THE SHORE—THE FISH MARKET AND FAIR—MIDNIGHT PROCESSION OF THE "BAMBINO"—GUY FAWKES' WORK—ENGLISH HABITS—THREE GROANS FOR CALABRIA—FAREWELL TO SICILY.

CHARYBDIS' ire had been roused by two earthquakes, feeble remnants of the last Calabrian shock, itself but inert successor of that great destroying one of hundreds of years before; which rent the two coasts, buried the inhabitants on their hearths beneath their own stones, and sent the startled waters in one vast wave from Sicily's lacerated sides to sweep thousands of beings from the Calabrian shore, who were standing there spared by falling mountains, rocks, castles, houses. This dread plague of earthquake still hovers round Messina, a lovely town, founded by Orion of the belt, and once called Zancle, from the sickle which

fell out of Ceres' hand and shaped its curved shores, whence rise its crescents of ivory dwellings, so bright they make even the deep blue waters reflect clear white beneath them; behind, the stern heights of the Antenamare, or Eagle Mount, try to soften in the skies. That mountain is dangerous ground; two of our countrymen having been nearly robbed there by peasants they took for guides: the old Spanish fort is a safer climb, and commands a wondrous view, though Ætna is for the present hid by nearer hills.

Within, Messina, for a Sicilian town, is clean and handsome; cholera having given the inhabitants severe lessons upon the danger of their former filthy state. The Strada Ferdinando runs spaciously through its centre, with openings showing the theatre and other public buildings; midway is a new marble statue of the present king, just replaced upon the pedestal whence a fac-simile had been wrenched by the Messinese in the last revolution, when, poor things! they fought so hard to get rid of the original. Fortunately, the lava pavement was dry, as it was mostly covered with showy dresses, handkerchiefs placed in folded triangles, and numberless trifles, which we have christened *animalculæ*, ready to be bought for Christmas

presents. The other streets were built much in the same style on a smaller scale, quite new in appearance, and hardly one of the houses more than two stories high, in case of being shaken down at any moment. The Victoria, a good hotel, with fire-places and table d'hôte, kept by Germans (of which there are an immense number of commercial travellers in the coast-towns of Sicily), is on the Marina or west-end of Messina, where the palaces of the rich merchants stand, overlooking the sea. One day after dinner, two Messinese gentlemen retired to fight a duel about something they had been discussing during the meal.

Though in a town of such commerce, we found the greatest difficulty in getting 10*l.* bank post-bills cashed, and went from one British merchant to another till it became quite despairing work; but at length alighted upon a strata of pure gold—the acquaintance of a gentleman and his wife who, (rare event among the English) behaved handsomely without any introduction; though our few favourite friendships have always been made in that manner, by the force of mutual sympathy; and I fancy one can test the real good breeding of a person by their conduct before they know anything about one. Mr. and Mrs. S—— were settled at Messina, where his

father had already made a large fortune by silk; we were invited to spend Christmas-day, after English service, at their villa three miles off, which was thought a model of English architecture by the natives, as it was not built over the stables and had glass in all the windows. They even persisted in calling the garden "Inglese," because the orange-trees were allowed to spread and give a little shade: beneath them on the terrace we sat, on the 25th of December, sketching Scylla and Charybdis, sucking sweet lemons, gathering myrtles and geraniums, and expecting to see "Olivia and her page" flit through an arcade, or "Malvolio cross-gartered" come and stand in the sun—the scene was so like a little bit of "Twelfth Night, or What You Will."

In the evening we went to our friends' box at the Santa Elisabetta theatre, a magnificent large house, completed under the auspices of the former Intendente, or civil governor of the town, who had married Mrs. S——'s sister, after promising faithfully to become completely English in habits, and sitting four hours a-day by a coal-fire to prove his sincerity —equivalent, for a Sicilian, to passing through a burning fiery furnace. The opera was Marco Visconti, by Petrella, a modern Neapolitan composer, without much melody in him; the story was from

the celebrated novel of the same name by Grossi, also a modern; who, besides being an excellent writer, is a very graceful poet, shown by his *Pellegrina Rondinella,* constantly recited and hummed by the natives: his works might be more known in England, and placed by the side of the Promessi Sposi, near the scene of which is that of his Marco Visconti, on the Lake of Como. This author is an exile, of course. The musical performance was below mediocrity, as in all the vast Italian theatres which they cannot afford to keep up properly; but any noise, as long as it is not too loud, is good enough for accompaniment to the hum of voices from the audience, who are receiving and paying visits the whole time; for which purpose they attend every evening, never being in a fit state to see anybody at home, so make drawing-rooms of their opera-boxes. One celebrated married belle regularly sat with her back to the house, and held forth the whole time to an audience of half-a-dozen gentlemen, only looking round once at the stage when an explosion took place. The love of dress of the Messinese in public is very great, even among the shop-keeping class, whom I have never seen so fine in any country. The promenade in the *Flora* when the band plays on Sundays, is over-

whelming to a poor dowdy traveller; the mixture of colours excruciatingly bad, orange the favourite, —and very becoming it is, alone in dark glossy hair, but with a light pink gown and crimson velvet mantilla inexpressibly mountebanky. The children were a melancholy sight, unhappy victims to bad taste, only fit to be the offsprings of Punch and Judy. To produce these charming effects as much as 1,000*l.* a-year is spent by some ladies of the rich merchant class. The nobility are poor, with the exception of one or two families; the gentlemen subscribe six tari each a month to the Casino, where they assemble in the evening, and two tari to the barber who shaves them in the morning.

Most Messinese have "Letterio" (*feminine* "Letteria") for one of their christian names. The word is derived from the "Letter" which the Madonna addressed to them with her own hand, promising to take them under her protection for ever. Written on ordinary paper with the usual ink, it is preserved in the Cathedral, and exhibited once a year as the chief relic. A copy is generally worn next the heart; I got one, and transcribe it. The Madonna used Latin for her correspondence:—

"MARIA VIRGO, Joachim filia, Dei Humilissima Serva, Jesu Christi crucifixi Mater, ex Tribu Juda, Stirpe David. Messinensibus omnibus salutem, et Dei Patris Omnipotentis Benedictionem.

"Vos omnes fide magnâ Legatos, et Nuntios, per publicum documentum ad nos misisse constat. Filium nostrum Dei genitum, Deum et hominem esse fatemini, et in Cœlum post suam Resurectionem ascendisse, Pauli Electi praedicatione mediante, viam veritatis agnoscentes. Ob quod Vos, et ipsam civitatem benedicimus, cujus Perpetua Protectrix nos esse volumus.

"Anno Filij nostri 42. Indictione I., III. Nonas Junij Lunæ 26. Feria 5. ex Hierosolymis. Maria Virgo quæ supra confirmat praesens Chirographum manu propriâ."

It was kindly translated for me, thus:—

"MARIA THE VIRGIN, daughter of Joachim, most humble servant of God, mother of Christ Jesus crucified, of the tribe of Judah and of the seed of David, to all inhabitants of Messina greeting, and the blessing of God the Father Almighty.

"It appears by public document that you all with great faith have sent to us Legates and Messengers. You confess that our Son is born of God and is both God and Man, and that after his Resurrection he ascended up into Heaven; acknowledging also the way of truth, through the preaching of Paul the Elect. On which account we do bless both you and the state itself, whose Eternal Protectress we purpose to be.

"In the Year of our Son 42. Indiction I., III. Nones of the Month of June 26. 5th Sunday, from Jerusalem. Maria the Virgin, here present, confirms over and above this document with her own hand."

On the receipt of this document the Messinese were so elated, they devised a festival of thorough originality, which has been repeated annually ever since. An edifice, called the *Bara,* is drawn through the streets for three days in the month of

August. On the summit (forgive me, but if my pen seem profane, what must be the reality?) is the Creator, represented by a youth, on whose outstretched hand stands a child, as the Madonna. Beneath is a monster sun, from whose rays hang myriads of winged infants slowly revolving. Beneath sit the saints: the whole is drawn by decorated horses, and accompanied by the clergy, amongst whom formerly was a camel, bearing a buffoon with cap and bells, who snatched whatever he could lay hold of, and told the people of their faults as he passed; but having given mortal offence to some one whose failings he ought to have respected, that part of the—I do not know what to call it—has been left out. This—spectacle—is the festive moment for all the country round; peasants leaving their farms, and princes their casinos, to fall for a moment beneath the blessed shadow of the Bara. For many centuries all the suspended children were living ones, often found to be dead at the end of their day's revolving, and considered sacred sacrifices; now parents are inclined to object to the immolation, and images have been substituted for those at the extreme point of the sun's rays; the others, though living, are supported with iron placed on stands one above the other, so that they revolve

without going topsy-turvy. The statue of the *Madonna della Lettera* stands in the *Matrice,* or mother church, midst some ancient columns of the temple of Neptune.

Seeing an antique coach of monstrous size, attended by antique servants, and into which entered an unlimited number of gentlemen in the Spanish dress and frill, we found it to be, on inquiry, the conveyance of the Senate (certainly large enough to hold the whole assemblage), and that it was then proceeding with them to the weekly Saturday ceremony of unveiling the statue of the Madonna at the Ave Maria. This was the moment chosen for the outbreak of the last revolution, the soldiers firing off their muskets and calling *Viva Maria!* their cry throughout the war. Poor things, their desperate struggles would have been successful, but for the Neapolitan troops which held the fort, and fired shells continually on their Sicilian brethren; so that the hatred between them is doubled since then, and King Bomba sits all the more securely on his throne from knowing he has not to dread the strength of unity among his victims. The Messinese and Catanese speak also very bitterly of the English, and on the slightest hint of our government sympathising with them

ironically ask, "Where is the constitution granted to us after your occupation of the island in 1812, and made an express condition in your treaty of help to the King? Cannot or will you not maintain your word?—in either case, Great Britain, you cut a miserable figure." "The splendid speeches, or rather *chiacchiere* (chatterings), upon us in Parliament, have only made us do foolish things by inspiring false hopes of aid, while two of your own men-of-war came and forbad Catania to fire upon the disembarking Neapolitan troops, even in self-defence! Had you any interest beyond honour in the matter it would have but required the 'knife in the sun'* to rouse your whole nation." To these discourses we were "mum," one of our popular statesmen being the scape-goat. His once spell-binding name is now a bye-word almost synonymous with "humbug." After hearing this gravely said, a most ludicrous circumstance proved it tangibly to us: a commercial traveller, who had a number of samples of wearing apparel, particularly shirt-collars, stamped with that once potent name, lamented the fall which they had lately sustained in value! During the revolution at Messina, the English retired on board Her Majesty's ships sent

* A national proverb to express a frivolous excuse.

for their protection; the officers took the opportunity of giving a series of balls, clearly visible to their opposite neighbours camping in blood-red carnage. Our friends having lingered on shore after the firing commenced, showed us how terrible were the bombs sent by the Neapolitans to the town; one they still preserved in fragments, having torn off their balcony and entered the ceiling of their drawing-room, shattering it above their heads. The fort stands on a strip of rock, circling a bay forming the port of Messina; between two of the strongest points rises a soft bank of verdure; it is the Protestant burial-ground.

To have a near view of the beauties of the town and straits, there is a climb to the terrace of San Gregorio which commands them all, and from whence, say they, Göthe wrote his poem of the fragrant south,—"Knowest thou the land where the citron-trees blossom?" (Kennst du das Land wo die Zitronen blühen?)—the myriads of round, rich orange-trees shading eastern roofs, with here and there a springing lightsome palm, answering, "Here is that sunny land!" The church is fantastic as a mosque, many coloured, and with curly spire; a provoking laughing neighbour to the grim old tower of Mattagriffone, built by our Richard Cœur de

Lion, which stands its sulky ground in Norman style. For a telling sketch, the Capucin monastery is ready placed upon another height, with dark cypresses behind its own arched buildings, and in front the monument to the victims of the last Plague upon its grassy lawn.

When winding up to this church and passing one of the thousand convents, we were amused at seeing a handsome nun holding a lively conversation through her bars with a young man. The friend with us said "elopements with fair nuns were not uncommon," and as a romantic instance told of the son of a wealthy merchant, who being captivated by a pretty portionless girl, was sent out of the way to Russia, his native land, and she forced to wear the novice's dress. In six months he found his way across Europe and appeared beneath the window of her cell. How she escaped no one knows—how do fair slaves escape from harems?—they fled and were married. Here should the tale stop but for jealous truth: in a few years their love turned to hate—she is now voluntarily within her convent's walls sighing for peace.

As in all other Italian towns, it is impossible to ramble in the neighbourhood of Messina; the usual high walls belonging to the villas enclose narrow

lanes for miles around, through which a lady *must* be driven. The sea-shore lies temptingly for a ramble beyond the quay. Mingling with a flock of goats brought to taste the salt waters, we were enjoying the almost forgotten pleasure of picking up shells and being caught in the spray; were looking up at both coasts, not knowing which to admire most,—Calabria tipped with snow above, rich red and blue beneath; Sicily with rainbow vapours 'midst her thousand peaks,—and were trying to eye the vulture's wing as it whirled round frittering rocks—when at each moment that wing flapped lower and lower—we saw the hideous crimson crest, an odour of horror filled the air . . . within a few paces lay two flayed horses! Here, on this Arcadian coast, is the chosen spot for casting dead animals away; and from the gay carriages on the daily drive, other corpses can be seen which the insulted wave refuses to receive. O Italians! why are you such an unclean race? . . . is your dignity, as well as moral sense, never hurt by this and other odious scenes? with all your feeling of the beautiful can you mar—nay, outrage—the voiceless scenes of Nature thus? . . . .

The Marina, or Quai, at Messina is always in a state of tumult, but at early daylight when the fish

is being sold, a thousand squeaking pigs mingled with braying donkeys could not produce more rending, tearing noises, which through closed windows and shutters nearly maddened even us, who for the last two months had been accustomed to an atmosphere of every combination of shrieks, and made us reflect what the people must be when really excited; in a desperate revolution for instance over flesh instead of fish. One monster like a shark, called *spaletta*, is cut up with hatchets and sold in slices, which, when cooked, are very like beefsteaks; a long thin fish, like an eel, with pointed nose and green bones, is delicious; and in the summer season the sword-fish are almost lived upon by the inhabitants, who watch them being harpooned from the bay as one of their amusements. On Christmas-day the usual mob was increased by sellers of all kinds of crockery: here was a man disposing by auction of a hundred and fifty Wedgewood teapots: there was another making desperate efforts to get rid of forty monster jars which must have contained Morgiana's thieves: a third's whole stock consisted of two frying-pans and an elegant vase of paper flowers: the vacuums between these respectable stockholders being filled by boys with dried fruit

run upon long sticks: and the awful, swarming animation of the whole assemblage was doubly wonderful on considering they had not been to bed all night: as, just the reverse to cosy English custom, Christmas night is spent in walking through the streets, of which every house is lighted, in honour of the procession of the "Bambino." This commences at midnight and is formed by the clergy, municipal bodies, religious fraternities and societies, lines of military with music, church attendants in helmets, all singing and bearing torches, and followed alongside by boys to catch the wax, and finally appears the tiniest of wax dolls in a priest's arms beneath a gorgeous canopy. We sat on a balcony all night like other people, watching this spectacle, the crowds circulating, and the mountaineers or *Ceramedde*, who come with their pipes to play to their "*caro Bambino*," and had done so in front of every image of its Virgin mother for nine days before its birth. The Intendente's house set forth a beautiful display of lights, which became blue, red, orange, and green in succession: fireworks and crackers were let off in the streets, then the dawn sent us all to bed, fortunate not to be blown up in a dream by an explosion like the Catanian one. Nervous ladies

should avoid the nine days before Christmas in Sicily; for what between the peasants' pipes, though a million times softer than the Scotch, yet dreadfully shrill; and the continuous Guy Fawkes' work, with squibs and crackers, which may be easily exploded by accidentally treading on —they will find themselves "very much shaken." Neither do I recommend them to follow us to Calabria, the slightest hint of that intention producing groans and moans among the inhabitants, sinking into the profoundest pity that such a monomania should have seized us; however, we shall see if the land, like a certain personage, is as black, etc. . . .

Kind commiserating friends, of whom we had made several, in a truly English spirit brought us paquets of consoling tea; one came with a canister in each pocket; we had already received another from a nice girl, his niece, who had charmed us by her music the whole of the former evening at her uncle's and aunt's house. The merchants bring up their daughters entirely in the English way, and are not anxious they should have Sicilian companions, which does not speak favourably for the natives, as there is no prejudice in the case; and on comparing the dirty bare walls of the houses of

the nobility (always excepting one or two families who have travelled) and their ragged ignorant inmates, the creatures of impulse, to the clean elegant style of residence and independence of conduct of the English settled at Messina, one can understand why no intimacy exists between them. They have also introduced real Newcastle coal-fires to check the blasts which rush across from cold Calabria.

It required some courage to part from this little knot of friends, and to venture into unknown lands whose entrance was between Scylla and Charybdis. Our first acquaintance, Mr. S——, who had behaved like an Eastern prince throughout, put us on board the bark which was to bear us across, and nearly sunk it with good things. His pretty wife and child waved their hands—and farewell Sicily! Island possessing everything, enjoying nothing; where Plenty's horn pours out squalor on the land which, under her present rulers, is "a jewel of gold in a swine's snout."

CALABRIA.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CALABRIA.

SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS.

New Year's day! O happy day, though spent 'twixt Scylla and Charybdis. Kind reader, if you have followed us to these capricious shores, and courageously embarked in our broad-sailed *Speronara* for Reggio, may your passage through the next twelve wavy months of life be no more agitated than its pointed prow, which veers enough in the circling whirlpools to animate our onward course, but not disturb the fancy; each twirl giving zest to future calm, not harsh enough to shock; in Charybdis—in all nature, there is no jar such as an ill-bred person gives in life. Scylla, rock of loveliness, stands beyond, like a fair temptation; in the distance all beauty, and once approached, giving no resting-place; unseen points beneath the tide piercing as remorse the wailing retreater. Steer far from her, O mariner! the entrance to this

promised land is by that line of hopeful blue marking the golden shores; true, there is a middle zone of billows, but here are those will carry us through them; they raise us on their shoulders, the spray reaches, touches, refreshes, spares us; and now hail, "evviva Calabria!" country so guarded by romantic dangers from travelling invasion.

A dragon is on the beach; a few "grani" turn him from the governmental into our service; he meekly shows the way to his den, a portico pillared in the water, where a voucher of good health is handed over to those whose passport tells them untainted by eastern touch. Then little bags! off to the custom-house, where the honour of bearing your tiny presences to the inn raised such a conflict as made us resolve to take you ourselves, which intention so alarmed the combatants they shook hands together, and promised to share the reward of the exertion. Arrived at the "Locanda di Sicilia," one glance into the rooms sent us rapidly down-stairs again; some other haven must be found; we veered about, till seeing "Trattoria della Villa Nuova" written on a pretty pink house on the quay, thought the cooking proprietor might have some spare rooms; he showed us two with windows and balconies, looking straight at their opposite

neighbour, Mount Ætna, whose name he has since taken for a sign. There is another of these simple places on the quay; thus a large party might divide at night and unite at meals, which were admirably served (for Calabrian style), with delicious varieties of fish. In the saucer of each coffee-cup was a pretty sonnet, on rose-coloured paper, wishing a happy New Year.

CHAPTER XIX.

REGGIO.

A VISIT FROM THREE HONEST MEN—EARTHQUAKY STATE OF THE TOWN—TWO KINDS OF POPULAR JEALOUSY—ORANGE-GROVES—BERGAMOT—SILKWORMS—A ROMANTIC AFTERNOON—SOME NATIONAL TRAITS.

"ECCELLENZA! Signora! ecco tre galant' uomini che la domandono" (three honest men are asking for you).

"March their honesties up, Padrone; there is room on the balcony for them all."

Two were from the Cavaliere Monsolini, a great man in these parts, to whom our Messina friends had written; he, having a fit of the gout, had sent flying outposts to announce his future appearance. The third was a young merchant, on his own account, proposing a drive along the "Coda di Volpe," or Fox's Brush, as that part of the coast is called which sweeps out insinuatingly to the south. We closed with him, the Cavaliere's envoys fixing the following day (gout permitting,) for visiting the bergamot and silkworm establishments.

The town of Reggio, which by an extraordinary hallucination once called itself "le petit Paris," totters on its legs like a baby; two-thirds of the buildings were levelled at once by a grand earthquake, and little shocks are constantly adding to the heaps of rubbish; the painted houses, frittering their stories away, look like rows of sugared cakes that have been nibbled. The poor crippled cathedral bravely displays a front, on which is largely carved an inscription, actually acknowledging the Bible for authority, "At Reggio St. Paul fetched a compass." One magnificent palace was being erected in sandstone, and covered with Cupids and other architectural decorations; on asking the merchant the meaning of any one creating so many little innocents, to have their noses broken, and fall with his magnificence into the dust, he said, "The edifice was constructed from ostentation, to prove its owner the wealthiest man in the province, which was divided between the jealousy of power and that of love." At the opera in the evening, though no beauties appeared sufficiently blazing to incendiarize any one, there were many faces very interesting, and eyes sufficient for a good deal of manslaughter; fortunately for peace, the ladies do not go in full dress, which generally sets off the sallow Italians,

who are inclined to look commonplace in simple attire.

The opera was the "Trovatore," sung with a completeness and feeling which told Calabria was the native land of the dark passions its music so fearfully unfolds. At one part the chorus mutinied; the house indignantly upbraided, and the drama continued with redoubled energy. The last scene of "Ernani" followed, beautifully sung; and as gas is unknown in the "petit Paris," while the altars of the saints support several wax manufactories, the stage was softly illuminated with hundreds of candles placed between myrtle-trees, as a little surprise from the manager to his audience.

The next morning the Cavaliere came in person, with a doctor, secretary, lawyer, and the two envoys who were also attached to his household; as he was an invalid, we wished to have gone down to meet him at his carriage, but he insisted upon climbing the stairs with the aid of a great stick, saying, "Signore, io fo il mio dovere;" (I do my duty;) which was the answer always returned to our thanks for the innumerable civilities, presents, opera boxes, and services offered to us throughout the kingdom.

Driving off in a large family coach (old depend-

ants inside, young ones out), in going along we were astonished at seeing oranges and lemons floating in the gutters, hardly a ragged child taking the trouble of sucking one; but on entering the plantations, where those tender trees grew thick as pines in the north, laden with fruit like grapes on the fruitful vine—and we drove for miles through their avenues, with the same round tops in perspective, all over the land,—then the real orange-groves of Italy showed themselves to us in all their richness and capability. The bergamot is like the lemon in appearance, and was then ready to be gathered. Peasants in the national dress of the province (long hanging caps, velvet jackets, and nether clothes of which three buttons opened at the knee, and let white frills cover it) were throwing them into baskets, held by graceful girls in many colours, who bore them to the cottages, where a quantity at once were put into a round pressing machine, with brass divisions; this revolved forty times, then a bell rang, and the fruit were lifted out whole, but their spirit had passed into a vessel beneath; eight or ten thousand making twelve pounds of perfume of exquisite quality, exported for adulteration to England.

The exhausted fruit only serves to fatten cattle; they were quietly munching it out of troughs, imparting a delicate perfume to their steaks. The lemons go through the same process, and their interiors make citric acid, which some proprietors had also endeavoured to extract from the bergamot, but found it of very inferior quality. In a separate part of each farm was an olive-pressing machine, worked by hydraulic power; while in the south of France, which ought to be more civilised, they are still using blinded donkeys for the purpose.

The silkworms, in winter tied up in bags like small shot, have their season in the summer, and reside entirely with the peasants. Rows of canes are fastened across all the rooms, about a foot from the ceiling; upon them are laid mats, and on these dwell the little spinners for their whole existence, from the mulberry-leaf to the cocoon age. In very small cottages there seemed hardly space to crawl into the beds beneath these awnings, while in others there was room to sling a tiny hammock from them for the baby. Skeins of glossy golden silk, like Helen's hair, were plaited and bound into large bundles, and placed in a deserted residence near the sea, ready for embarkation to countries pos-

sessing the appurtenances for weaving them into rustling flounces.

All the peasants on the Cavaliere Monsolini's estates received him like a father, and treated him with as much respect, but more affection, than an English gentleman of his position would experience from his tenantry. "La bacio la mano" (I kiss your hand) was their salutation.

When the morning had passed midst these pleasant statistics, the party proposed driving for amusement to some of the surrounding villas, and there we spent the most completely Italian afternoon, in a poetical and romantic point of view, we had yet had. Each garden was a bower of graceful trellis, the pliant vine leading through thousand arches of tender green, to spots where the massive tree of tropic growth hung over the delicate camelia and sweet cassia; the sun glowed warm through their leaves; rustic seats were placed where all the beauties met; pliant baskets at our feet were filled with luscious Mandarine oranges plucked by attendant peasants who remained to play on their rustic pipes, the small reeds of which they held two, or even three, to their lips at once; one, most agile, placed a ladder against the long trunk of the African palm, and brought down a

branch, golden as the dates it bore. The balm of the south was soft as ever the imagination had breathed it; light and life danced on the ground; the young envoys, romantic as their country, had each prepared an ode, and recited it with an animation inspired by the novelty of the subject, "Ladies visiting their Calabria." Seeing this talent appreciated, they burst forth into lively improvisations, each taking up the strain the other dropped, and carrying it on with an animation which gave new turns and fresh ideas to the original verse. On re-entering the inn, their buoyant spirits found further vent in the graceful steps of the national "Tarantella;" harp and violin were summoned upstairs; the handsome landlady and pretty niece entered with zest into its maze—all that has been said and written of merry Italy in other ages seemed realized by this joyous close to a Calabrian day!

The great event of Sunday was the passage of a regiment of troops, commanded by the General in person.

"Where are they going?"

"To try to eradicate brigands from the principality, Signora."

Our places were already taken in the "Posta"

for the following day. The poor Cavaliere, who thought we were travelling the road to extermination, begged us hard to spend one pleasant evening more in life, and see Goldoni's play of the *Ventaglio* from his box at the theatre; but never attending places of that kind on Sundays, we were obliged to refuse him the consolation of soothing our last moments.

At our former visit to the theatre, a little trait of national manners showed itself. A respectable looking, middle-aged man, had crossed in the bark from Messina with us, and proposed dining at the same hour at the Locanda, as in other countries when on the move. He was very well behaved, but we were rather surprised, on adjourning to the opera, at seeing him coolly set off with us; but we said nothing, thinking the young merchant had invited him, who was also under the delusion we had asked him, and between the two, he was comfortably installed in the box. The next day, as he was preparing to spring into the gentleman's carriage, already over-filled, we quietly asked "If he had been requested to do so by the owner?" He answered "Yes," but walked off in another direction; the young men then laughingly said we had seen a specimen of the ingenious proceeding called

"infiltrarsi," or "filtering" oneself anywhere. A lady told me the Spaniards also excelled in that; any visitors who happened to be calling, accompanying her and her husband even to private parties, till they took courage to check them.

CHAPTER XX.

JOURNEY THROUGH THE CALABRIAS.

THE SITUATION OF CALABRIA—THE CARRIAGE AND ESCORT—STYLE OF THE COUNTRY—PALM-TREES AND HOSPITALITY—THE YOUNG LADY AND THE BRIGANDS—PIZZO AND MURAT—BRIDGE BETWEEN THE ADRIATIC AND MEDITERRANEAN—THE YOUNG LADIES OF CALABRIA—AN EXECUTION—TOWNS AND COSTUMES—BOTANICAL BEAUTIES—MIDNIGHT ARRIVAL IN THE CAPITAL.

Most people have an idea that this principality, which gives its name to the king's eldest son, commences close to Naples, instead of being divided from it by several provinces, and consisting of three parts—Principato Ultra Prima, capital Reggio; Ultra Seconda, capital Cantanzaro; and Citeriore, chief town Cosenza, our destination.

The Posta traverses them three times a-week, continuing for five days and nights, through Basilicata and Bari to Naples. At nine o'clock in the morning it left Reggio; before that hour the envoys, with the young merchant and his brother, were in attendance, with each a new sonnet and bottle of bergamot; they insisted upon accompanying us the first ten miles; but though the other passengers kindly turned out upon the

roof, there were but two seats among them; so a compromise was made by one from each party setting off, and promising to those left behind to read their sonnets to us.

This was accomplished with a loud accompaniment of postilions' whip-cracking: and Mamma was malicious enough to laugh heartily in both sleeves; I, being the Muse on the altar to whom the adulation was addressed, felt inclined to be slightly blinded by the incense, and indulgently listen to what they sung about Donna Emilia, delighted as they were to find a subject; when no lady is appositely in the way, Scylla is generally the more stony inspirer; but if they could be so poetical on merely a lively English girl, to what strains would one of our classic beauties rouse them? I should be quite content to play second fiddle for the amusement of watching their novel excitement, and in the meantime will repeat one of the minor poems, to show what young Italy is capable of.

SONETTO.

Improvisato.

"Bella qual vaga mattutina aurora
Che fiammeggia il suo crin d'oro gemmata,
Pari a quel raggio ch' avido s' indora
Sul mattin della stella innamorata,

M' apparisti o! Donzella; e la sonora
Tua voce al cor mi siese desiata.
Il candor, la beltate che t' infiora
Il viso mi ti reser più bramata.
La tua dimora invan sperai che breve
Non fusse per lenire il mesto core,
Che di te s' invaghi, spirto gentile.
Il dolor che mi stringe, unqua simile
Udirsi può; per tue virtù, l'amore
Mi rende il tuo partir e tristo e greve."

At the first post, Villa San Giovanni, the young enthusiasts were obliged to alight and give place to the Corriere, who, exhausted by his long journey, had remained there to recruit, before encountering the return, which would make ten days and nights of shaking, supposing the roads at their best: when thick snow has fallen on the chain of mountains containing Monte Cocuzzo, and the "Grea Stone of Italy," the journey is indefinitely prolonged. An armed soldier mounted the box, a rapier was placed inside with us, then its owner followed in uniform and order, and was introduced as a gentleman; which character he perfectly supported during the whole journey, viz. by making our wishes—law: and besides, instead of letting the postal correspondence interfere, placing the carriage, horses, and postilions, entirely at our service.

They were ordered accordingly to pull up at

various fine sketching points; Scylla was the first, that "Eagle of the Sea," as she appears with her jutting crest and wings of fortified rock; her "dogs," which Homer says roared so terribly, were small crags mildly bathing in smooth water, letting porpoises roll where sang the killing syrens of old. Whilst I was drawing, a gentleman came from a garden to offer a nosegay of roses, showing by that little action how delightfully untravelled the country must be, and the absence of beggars echoed the fact. The beauty of the views appeared to increase every instant; Stromboli rose as a pyramid with the point cut off; isle after isle of the Liparis hove in sight; the Faro point of Sicily with its two lakes seemed striving to touch the coast beneath us, so narrow were the straits; spreading mulberry-trees producing two kinds of fruit, one black, the other white, alternately shaded the road with vines fixed on lofty colonnades of stone, and bearing such massive grapes, they rested in panniers suspended beneath for their support, whilst others were drying into raisins. Through the vista was advancing a group of peasants—they bore past a little girl in a white frock, stretched on a bier of flowers.

Bagnara and Palma were the next towns, the

latter taking its name from the palms which love to grow around it; and as the bay beneath is that of La Gioja or "Joy," the trees show a charming discrimination: reciprocating their friendliness, the inhabitants have erected a monument to their honour,—the waters of the fountain on the market-place, dropping from the leaves of a lofty white marble palm. The day was now not quite so bright as when we first set off; the Corriere said, "'tis evening approaching;" never had hours flown more quickly! He pressed us to take some refreshment, as the Director of the Post was an acquaintance of his; and showing us upstairs, introduced a lively old gentleman, his wife, and daughter, all full of hearty kindness; and soon coffee was handed round by a servant dressed something like Auzucena in the Trovatore! "Let me know before you arrive the next time, and I will have a more plentiful repast prepared," said the Director, as the ladies kissed us, and the eight horses impatiently waved their bright green feather top-knots. The carriage had been changed for one more solid, as the hilly district was commencing; we had the front coupé with a cupboard opening into the boot; and the Corriere the back one to himself. Lofty ground was rising in front; we

took a long look at the disappearing coast, saw the last angle of Trinacria like a tiny foot in the sea, and could but send the isle a few salutations in its own national way, thus—by placing a kiss on the fingers of the left hand, laying it on the palm of the right, and blowing it off affectionately towards any land one wishes well to. The road then sunk between the mountains, and darkness covered all.

"Are you leaning out of the carriage from affright, Signora?"

"No, Don Raffaelle, but to take in the full majesty of the hour."

"While I have my sword, you need not dread the fate of that young lady, who, a few years ago, was taken out of a travelling carriage, her father and two brothers being first bound hand and foot, and never has been heard of since."

It was high time for the moon to come out; beyond Monteleone she did so, and shone full upon the cheerful Marina of Pizzo, where landed Murat, in his attempt to regain the kingdom after Napoleon's first fall, and the result of which was his execution. 'Tis said there is a party in favour of his son, chiefly emigrants, who would think anybody better than the present ruler; but those

who have seen and tried to converse with that son, can certainly not prefer him to a man who has at least had the advantages of education. No! Italy is worthy a rather more refined race of monarchs. The way becoming again darkened, we could not help falling asleep.

Morning rose to show the road poised high between two seas. Here Calabria contracts her lands from the pressure of the Adriatic on the one side, the Mediterranean on the other, till she forms a lofty bridge between them. A rainbow arched over each ocean,—the noble country was piled up with wildest nature—all was grand around—save the plague-spot crosses which marked Murder! o'er the scene. Each small crucifix, and they were thick as mile-stones, stood where a dagger had been thrust through some heart, mostly in sudden fury, though revenge claims largely her bloody share. In this land of quick feelings, love and hate are fearfully neighbouring. A village rises on the highest point, where sat an amphitheatred town of old. Tiriolo is its name, and two charming Signore de Rosas gave us a breakfast, romantic as the view their pretty eyes gazed upon through the portico. Our tea was boiled in vessels of classic shape, and the milk poured from an Etrus-

can pitcher; the fresh eggs were tightly bound in napkins, leaving one end peeping out to be cracked, and eaten with the finest wheaten bread. The Signore had never yet tasted infused Souchong, and I am sorry to say, put the very first mouthful of the mixture out; they were in the highest spirits, delighted with the adventure, and possessed presence of mind enough for a court. Tiriolo, like many other villages, had no inn; thus the country still yields specimens of that old-fashioned virtue, hospitality, in some places almost reduced to a fossil state.

At the succeeding post, a fat commissary of police wanted a seat to the next town, to see about some crime or other; and as the Corriere would not have his worship inside with him, telling us privately because he took bribes, our sentinel was obliged to relinquish his seat on the box, upon receiving his written order. As we did not like seeing him walk off with his carabine, Don Raffaelle said, "it would make no difference in our safety, the guard being always the first to decamp upon the approach of brigands, after wildly firing into the air." Some miles further on, a beautiful bye-road branched off to the right, leading to Catanzaro, the second Capital, where, but a month

before, the fire of musketry had startled the inhabitants on busy market-day; that public time had been chosen as a warning for the execution of fourteen robbers on the piazza.

The day being very fine and tempting to sit outside, we made the old magistrate enter, and nap in our places, which secured his devoted gratitude, and a delicious national condiment wrapped up in a delicate white skin, the same material as that used by the Corriere for his provisions, preserving them quite fresh, particularly the butter; it ought to have enveloped our good capons from Reggio. He showed us a way of cleansing and refreshing the hands in travelling, by rubbing them with citron.

The towns in Calabria, though built of stone, are certainly pitiful; earthquakes have introduced a slovenly style of erection, the scaffolding being placed inside, and projecting through the walls, which, when it is withdrawn, remain full of holes; within the rooms, they are filled up by paper or paint, but no one takes the trouble of doing the same outside, merely for appearance' sake, on such a capricious foundation: thus the edifices seem riddled with shot, and disconsolate as old battered fortresses. But there is in each street a spectacle

which compensates for all shortcomings—the men and women are in real costume.

Those beautiful white head-dresses, square at the top, flowing behind; bodies of velvet, laced and trimmed with coloured ribbons, and under-skirts of red, covered their stately figures; across their shoulders were thrown woollens, striped in brilliant orange. Those going to mass, or a christening, were decked with gold; mourners had head-dresses of transparent black, folded square as the white; others repairing to the fields, wore petticoats all but tight, with blue over-skirt open in front, and knotted behind at pleasure; their stockings ceased cut off at the ancles, and shoes were rare. The men appeared brigands all over: the pointed hat, which has played so large a part in romantic portraiture, towered on every head, and was festooned with endless rows of velvet, each leaving a pendent loop at the side; their jackets, gaiters, and goat-skin sandals, were of the exactest bandit cut; the fops could be known by brilliant coloured waistcoats, and gay edgings loaded with buttons. Not a few here and there were in this attire, but all; they were Calabrians in perfection.

The country continued beautiful, undulating, and thickly wooded. Those who fancy forest-trees

will not grow in Italy, should have seen how thick were the stems of the oak and elm, and would long to return in spring to rest beneath their leaves; the olive even, almost synonymous with "stunted," there unpruned, waved gracefully as the beech. Patriarchal carts with wheels so thick, they looked as if a team alone could make them revolve, were dragged along by animals more oppressed with decorations than any old field-marshal. Hedges of aloes, thick as cacti in Sicily, marked the boundaries of domains, forming bristling *chevaux de frise* no truant boy would like to be caught on—except they alighted on a blossom, which, in this country, appears every six or seven years, and must throw botanists into ecstasies.

Night came again much too soon; at one in the morning, a fortress showed its battlements, on a high hill, above a town spreading over several minor ones. Soon a violent jolting over vicious flints, different to the good, easy, *Strada Consularia* (as they still call the roads from the Romans), told we had entered Cosenza.

All the Post-Office clerks had gone to bed, as, at each station reached after dark, they required half an hour to be brought to a consciousness that the Royal mail had arrived! Don Raffaelle woul

not let us alight till he found out an inn prepared for travellers. He was a long time absent, and the worthy magistrate was busy plying us with cups of coffee, to keep our eyes open. At length he returned, having been told by sundry night-caps at the windows of three inns, "that they were full," which he said, was mere laziness: at the fourth he remained till they had furnished an empty room on purpose. He made the postilions drive to the door, and acknowledging things did look rather wretched, threw his cloak on the floor, saying: "There is at least a carpet," proving that Walter Raleighs are not extinct. He then continued his journey to Naples; and as forty hours' travelling had left us but few Sybarite feelings, we soon slept soundly in the really clean beds.

CHAPTER XXI.

COSENZA.

ALARIC'S GRAVE—LYING IN STATE OF A GREAT MAN—ADORATION OF THE MAGI—SALE OF PIGS—ELIGIBLE YOUNG CALABRIANS—ARTISTIC SCENES — HEROES — A PRESENT — DONNA BELLA — A SILK MANUFACTORY—TALES OF THE JESUITS AND MINISTERS—PRISONERS—THE PRIMITIVE OPERA—NATIONAL IDEA OF ENGLAND—DISINTERESTED INNKEEPERS—OUR PRIVATE EQUIPAGE.

WHAT do you think, reader, was the prospect in front of the house? The site of the burial-place of Alaric!

Immediately under the two windows met the Busento and Crati, the two rivers which were stopped in their course until the Last of the Goths was interred beneath the passage of their returning waters.

The most good-natured of landladies answered our call for breakfast with good coffee, and several national delicacies: buffaloes' milk, thick as clotted cream, warmed with eggs, and called *Provola; muzzarelli,* or bags of batter, grilled with pepper, and made into capital little "devils;" and the national goats' cheese, called *caccia cavallo.* Finding all our

linen dyed yellow with bergamot, three out of the four scent-bottles having cracked, she set about extracting it at once, saying: "ask us to do all you wish, '*siamo all' erta*'" (we are on the alert). Taking immediate advantage of this state of activity, we set the maid to scour the brick floor, as she confessed, for the first time; the usual cleanser being a bunch of foxes' brushes! and of which they probably had eaten the bodies.

Her boy, Petruccio, took our letter of introduction to a lady owning a silk manufactory: he returned saying, that on account of its being the Feast of the Adoration of the Magi (Twelfth Night) no one was at work. The lady soon however, sent her manager to inquire after us, and to say she could not immediately call herself, as her uncle, the Secretary-General of the province, had died the day before, and if we walked to the church, could see him lying in state. At that moment a magnificent procession swept past, beneath flowing banners, accompanied by the civil and military powers. On entering the fane, whither we followed them, they stood each with a light, around the gilded catafalque, on which was raised their late colleague in official uniform, and high funeral mass commenced. At the conclusion, an oration was pronounced over

the body by the young man who had visited us, as representative of his patron, the lady's husband, then a political *relegato*, or prisoner, in the island of Procida.

In a remote corner of the church stood a trunk, with brass nails, in which, towards evening, the deceased Secretary would be removed to a vault by monks, his own servants following to take possession of the key.

The other churches were full of people *adoring the Magi:* and no wonder, when their Eastern highnesses were so brilliantly clad and situated. In the most conspicuous part of the sacred edifice, mounds were raised to imitate the hills of nature, covered with trees, and traversed by roads, up which were climbing tiny figures of men, women, and children, towards one point, where cows were grazing; there, lay a baby in the arms of a young female leaning on a manger, and crowned witb a miniature diadem. She was receiving the obeisances of three gorgeous potentates, whose followers bore heaps of presents. The effect was curious as it was pretty; some of the *Presepi*, as these clerical twelfth-cakes are called, being more tasteful than others. One was entirely constructed of different-coloured crystallized clays, and surmounted by a

castle, in front of which played a fountain, surrounded by flowers; in the background flourished a whole farm-yard of goats, hens, and little ducks. A road led down to the grotto of the Nativity; on the way stood a *Trattoria*, for the refreshment of the pilgrims, among whom was a King of Spain in ruff and spurs, and pretty ladies in gold dresses. This assemblage, lighted up at night by variegated lamps, delighted the people.

The following morning we were roused before daylight by a fearful squeaking beneath the windows. Alas! a pig-market was being held over Alaric's grave. The rivers not having had a fit of inundation lately, a dry bank rose between them, upon which thousands of those animals, quite black, were bartered. The landlady mysteriously pointed out, through the hinges of the door, three eligible young pork-merchants coming upstairs, who, she said, were "*richi, richissimi;*" and their magnificent watch-chains gave some probability to the idea, though their dress and rosy cheeks were those of peasants.

What with the swine, and a finery fair, called *Beffano*, always held at the Epiphany, to let people smarten up for the Carnival, the town was as full as it could be. Instead of one sugar-loaf hat on each

head, few were content with less than two; a new and an old changing places according to weather and circumstances; thus a shower promoted the old one; blue sky or a pretty girl—quick upwards went the new. The women were not behindhand in contrivances: on approaching a resplendent apron, it proved to be stamped on the dress! Our style must equally have astonished them, judging by the cessation of business it caused; the violent spontaneous efforts of the "Urban guard," to prevent a crowd following us, besides improvisatore appeals to their politeness: "Do not let the ladies think they are in Africa!" though there never was a scene less desert-like. The entrance to our Albergo led through the stable, and made a picture fit to drive an artist mad: the deep burnt-sienna background, of which colour the whole house partook, displayed the animated and majestic groups in richest harmony; they divided to let us pass, and who could stop to count the little puddles on the staircase, or the trap-doors opening into mangers?

Later in the evening, I happened to go out to call Petruccio, and losing my way in the long passages, came upon an unparalleled sight: the whole house was hollow beneath, and rested on intermina arches, under each of which was slumberir

peasant with his horse! In the dim light they looked like dead heroes waiting to be called to the halls of Walhalla. I ran off, dreadfully frightened, and stumbled against a boy bearing an enormous dish of fancy cream, sprinkled over with minute rainbow-coloured sugar-plums: this was a present just arrived from our unseen lady acquaintance, who soon followed herself, and was as handsome as her gift: I shall call her Donna Bella.

She fixed the next day for us to visit the silk manufactory. It contained about a hundred looms, constructed at Naples by English artisans, and worked by hydraulic pressure in the season, which was then over. For many years, their superintendent had been an Englishman, whom they spoke of as "Povero Tom Vilkins." He was drowned in the Mediterranean at the wreck of the Ercolano. The term of Donna Bella's husband's imprisonment, originally twenty-five years in irons, for having taken part in the last revolution, had, by judicious management, been reduced to a few months' sequestration, and he was expected home with lively anxiety.

Cosenza is a town panting for liberty and advancement, consequently severely repressed; hardly a family is without some of its members in prison,

and the young men are never allowed to travel, or exercise their talents in any other place: they must study and follow their professions on the spot; and when one considers that in the legal one, for example, the salaries of the judges are but fifty pounds a-year, the position of inferior officials cannot hold out much inducement to emulation. They say the government must intend men to take bribes, by putting them on such a miserable pittance to decide upon causes involving the transfer of millions; and that it is one way of making the public support their servants, the army and the church swamping all the resources of the state. At the Opera, we were quite amused by the cool way in which the righteous and unrighteous judges were pointed out to us; though I am happy to say the latter were in the minority.

Calabria holds forth few temptations for extravagant living, with her primitive ways and reasonable provisions: the land is very productive; some of the proprietors have as much as 12,000*l.* a-year, and contributions in kind from their farmers. The Jesuits try hard to get the consciences of these fortunes into their hands, and do incalculable injury as spies in the provinces, their influence at headquarters being almost unbounded. The town but lately spent 50,000 ducats in building a beautif

theatre; the fraternity, jealous at so much money going towards anything but a church, pretended, when it was quite finished, to have discovered an ancient chapel, belonging to their order, had once stood upon the ground, which having been thus consecrated, they could exchange for no other. *An order came from Naples to take down the new theatre, and restore them the land.*

Their next attack was upon a lady whose husband had left her all his fortune. They declared his will a forgery; and as she immediately got the better of them at the local tribunals, they carried the cause to Naples. There the lady's advocate told her the contest was all but vain, unless one experiment succeeded. He placed bank notes for 15,000 ducats in a portfolio, asked to see the Minister of Justice, and putting it on his table, said: "Here are the arguments in favour of my client," then ran off as quickly as he could. The minister took up the portfolio, and finding what it contained, rushed after him saying: "Carry this away! I will not even look at it!"—but the lawyer was off, and he had time to reflect. "After all," thought he, "the lady is the persecuted one" . . . and writing to the judge these words: "I present you my friend the Marchese . . . will you see that justice is done

her"—the cause was immediately settled in her favour.

The ministers receive a thousand a year, and live at the rate of from five to ten thousand, under the King's nose. One great source of profit is procuring pardons. For instance: a man is condemned to the galleys for life; he has wealthy friends, who understand setting about things; they interest the minister, or anyone near the King's person, in his favour; and when his Majesty is in a good humour, or on an auspicious occasion, a few words spoken with tact, procure him a pardon or mitigation of punishment. The state of political prisoners without friends is miserable beyond imagination. Those who are not at hard labour in chains, lie fevered in utter darkness and dirt; any provisions sent from without are marred by the bayonets of soldiers thrust through them. I could repeat endless facts, told me by victims themselves, but fear to bring trouble upon some unlucky head: and will merely add, they assured me Mr. Gladstone's pamphlet upon the prisons of Naples was faithful, and wondered that party spirit should run so high in sage England as to induce any one to contradict such downright truth.

The subject of conversation in Cosenza was, at that moment, the great earthquake which had just desolated the neighbouring provinces, and considerably shaken their own buildings: the churches and many of the houses not already supported were being propped up with beams outside. The fortress, two or three years since, had been partly thrown down, burying the troops quartered inside.

Donna Bella, and her daughter, Donna Bellina—a magnificent specimen of Calabrese womankind, of true Roman type—called to take us to the Opera, escorted by a number of gentlemen and lanterns. The singers are now obliged to share the circus with the horses; a movable stage being placed at one end of it, while the animals are away cavalcading in some other town. The opera was still the Trovatore, which seems to have taken firm hold of the feelings of the people; and, beautifully performed in the heart of its own native mountains, was irresistibly stirring. The Gipsy required no paint; in the scene where the fire is preparing to receive her, the flame was fanned by the huge bellows worked with chains, which are used in their great forges, and seem to have travelled from the Castle of Otranto. The audience knew all the words by heart, could not resist humming them,

and seemed on the point of joining in the chorus. Theatrical jealousies have even penetrated to Cosenza; none of the lady singers ever condescending to be called "Secunde donne," but "Conprime donne;" though their customs are so primitive, that on "Serenate," or benefit-nights, they go round to collect money in person.

On leaving the house, several people came to ask Donna Bella to introduce them to us, as there is quite a mania for England in Calabria; our country appears to them as a fair mirage of bliss on a distant sea presided over by an angel: they even said, "You do not require the Madonna with a queen!"

It was especially disagreeable having to leave this primitive town, where even the innkeepers were disinterested. On asking for our bill, they pretended to ignore it, and would not name a price, saying, "They should be content with whatever we chose to give, it was such a pleasure receiving strangers." This was no fudgical speech: after a consultation with our friend, we presented them with the sum she suggested, and which produced raptures finding vent by covering our hands and garments with kisses.

The carriage to take us to Paolo was worthy of the place; nothing like it has been seen in our pa

of the world for centuries: there may be one or two in the pictures of old processions at Hampton Court. A ladder of steps led up to a closed calash deeply encrusted with brass, and constructed with panels decorated by mythological subjects; in front projected a vast hood, covering the coach-box, and four jolly cart-horses with crimped manes and tails, were harnessed to it abreast. When this equipage spluttered up to the Albergo with two drivers, an armed guard, and three boys hanging on, the excitement was intense. At starting, as the four animals could not squeeze past in a line, two were taken off, and after turning the corner, put-to again, that they might gallop through the principal street, to the terror of the pet lambs and goats fastened at most of the doors. As usual, some gentlemen escorted us part of the way, then resigned us to the care of the "Urban guard," who being attired exactly like his fellow-peasants, only looked more the bandit from bearing a gun.

This corps is in part composed of the neighbouring countrymen, who are obliged to mount as sentinels in turn, and might truly be called *Rustici in urbe*. When off duty, their chief occupation is to seize on rich proprietors and keep them in the mountains till ransomed—the black mail system of

the middle ages. We watched one gentleman setting off with four servants armed to the teeth, and thought he must be going to ride to Naples at least; but no, his house was only fifteen miles distant, and he could not safely reach it with less protection. There are few organized bands of robbers, the peasants generally acting under the pressure of want: when mounted as guards, they may be implicitly trusted. There is so much countenance in a Calabrian face, you may read all it means, and cannot feel distrustful; they were by far the handsomest set we had seen, the coldness of their winters giving them an English freshness. The country is just in a proper state for enterprising travellers, while there is a little peppering of danger over it, to give romance, and no fear of spying in a tiny shop window, a card, with "At home" ready printed, as we once discovered in a remote Swiss valley.

CHAPTER XXII.

PAOLO.

SCENE OF THE PERSECUTION OF WALDENSES—SNOW—ROOSTING WITH COCKS AND HENS—PEEPING EYES—HILLS OF THE ROBBERS—TALE OF THE TOWER—SANCTUARY OF SAN FRANCESCO DI PAOLO—CHAPELS OF HIS MIRACLES—A NEW FRIEND—A HORRIBLE STORY—THE MONKS—NATIONAL MANNERS—DEPARTURE.

THE distance to Paolo is twenty-one miles, and a public conveyance goes three times a week from Cosenza. The way at first lies through noble forests of chestnut-trees covered with mosses, then descends one of the hills where took refuge the Waldenses during their persecution in the fourteenth century; when part of the inhabitants, having become Protestants, were immediately exterminated by sword and fire: to this day no subject is allowed to belong to any other than the Roman Catholic faith. The road descended continually for twelve miles, and the downward trotting must have shaken the portly horses dreadfully; the carriage hung on lofty springs, looked like an old dowager in a monster hood, shaking her head over them.

I am sorry to say snow had begun very impro-

perly to fall, the town of Paolo requiring no addition to its shaken wretchedness; the flakes falling upon a bier then passing, made the habit of bearing about the uncovered dead appear most uncomfortably ghastly. The line of tottering houses called a street, was filled by the funeral procession in pointed masks with holes for the eyes, and as they were following an infant corpse, were also robed in white trimmed with blue; over which, on account of the weather, they had grotesquely placed projecting wide-awake hats and "policemen" capes. Their torches lighted us to the best inn, very Sicilian in appearance, but already full. There was another which could only accommodate us next door to the cocks and hens, there being but a slight partition between them and the head of our roosting-places. Such a chanticleering as began at daybreak would have laid Hamlet's or any other ghost for ever!

The doors were as riddled as the houses; various eyes had early taken telescopic glances through the holes, which we tried to stop up with little rolls of paper; but the current ideas of peeping being very primitive, they thought nothing of slipping these out, taking a look, and screwing them in again; so Mamma, with her usual ingenui

set about stopping them in another way; and after an hour of hard work, there could not have been more than half-a-dozen overlooked.

The appearance of Paolo from the sea is wild and striking in the extreme: it has chosen a rock for perch, that it may be inaccessible except by viaducts worthy of the ancient Romans; the mountains above seem exactly formed for the use made of them—a sure and favourite retreat of robbers. At that moment, the last remains of the band, of whom fourteen had been shot at Catanzaro, were hiding midst their summits, commanded by a woman, of whom more anon. To do the authorities justice, they are making every effort to extirpate the race of Abellinos.

The ancient tower of Paolo, long held by the Counts of the country, has been the scene of many a lawless struggle, and owes its ruin to Montebello's brigand band, who, finding all attacks repelled by the brave defenders, traced and stabbed the lover of the Count's only daughter; the next day, when Donna Isabella went forth to meet him by the fountain's shade, she found herself in the grasp of the robber chief.

The town has always been the devoutest in the kingdom, as birth-place of the great Saint Francesco

T. Picken, lith. Routledge, Warnes & Routledge, London & New-York. Day & Son, Lithographers to the Queen.

PAOLO ON THE COAST OF CALABRIA

di Paolo: nearly all its inhabitants are called after him, setting them at their wits' end to find distinctive nicknames—Cico, Chieco, Quico; and we were waited on by an old Sticko!

The saint lived as a hermit in a neighbouring ravine as late as the fifteenth century; above his cell stands a large monastery inhabited by Franciscan monks, one of the mendicant orders, now possessing large estates and the right of Sanctuary. The woods hang over the classically arcaded building, themselves o'ertopped by gigantic rocks and icy peaks; the scene but required a hastening criminal to seize the sanctuary-cross and perfect its ideal appearance. Within the chapel, where alone women can enter, is the saint's image in silver, and his relics in caskets of gold. The cloak and hood with which he divided the Straits of Messina; his sandals and two teeth, left as remembrances to his sister, his poverty allowing no other legacy. A body was lying before the altar:—constantly meeting the dead had become very painful to us, and this one bore the marks of having parted from life by a violent struggle. But the custom is so national, even members of the royal family are subject to it; the King's sister having recently laid in state in the palace chapel, the public being

admitted to view her, with her ladies and equerries sitting around in full court dress, and asking her royal highness every quarter of an hour "if she required anything?" Poor Lablache went through the same ordeal, without the court ceremony, his once fine and portly person shrunk almost to nought.

Around the cloisters was "il Deserto," a beautiful slope of fresh grass, where the youthful saint used to retire for prayer at the age of six years. The path up to it was bordered by little chapels containing images; twelve new ones had just been erected in fulfilment of a *voto*, or pious vow, made by some one saved from shipwreck. They were built of glossy white porcelain, and in front of each was portrayed, in coloured tiles, one of the miracles of the saint; such as his crossing the Straits upon his cloak, to the confusion of a boatman who had refused to row across without recompense: another was his marking eyes, nose, and mouth, upon the face of a child born without them: a third was his donkey kicking off its own shoes into the face of an unbelieving blacksmith, who had requested money for putting them on. Seeing us smile at this, our guide, who I must specially introduce to you, reader, observed that we heard of quite as wonderful things

being done in the present day by electricity and steam.

This gentleman just mentioned was manager of the estates of the monastery, and resided within its precincts. He had been introduced by our Cosenza friends in a letter of which the warmth of expression showed their kindness of heart; we had sent it him late in the afternoon, and he replied in the following words:—

"RESPETTABILE MILADI,

"As the hour of Sanctuary is past, I cannot come to pay reverence to you this evening; to-morrow I shall be ready to execute your honourable commands.

"Kissing your hand, and wishing you a happy night, I sign myself your meekest servant,

"L———.

Addressed, "*Alla distinta Miladi Emilia.*"

The next morning he appeared, followed by a boy, as we were sitting down to the usual Liliputian cups of coffee, in a room where the almost sole article of furniture was an enormous fan, waved by a little monk over a brazier. He knelt down to kiss my mother's hand; then telling the boy to come forward, poured several pounds of cake and sugar-plums into my lap! Nor was this all; the table became suddenly spread with chocolate, milk, and rosoglio; we never had so sweet a breakfast!

The donor would receive no thanks, saying

England was a country he venerated, and it had always been his wish to show kindness to some of her children. He stirred up the people of the house to exertion, escorted us about all day, chose the spot for the sketch I have selected, and sent in a little kid to be dressed for dinner. He returned, by special permission from the Sanctuary, to share it with us, bringing some bottles of the delicious wine of Diamante, a town on a rival rock a few miles down the coast. After dinner he gave us, as dessert, brigand stories: the most remarkable was of the woman-captain of the band then encamping above the town.

"She was the wife of a peasant, and during his absence received frequent visits from a neighbour.

"Her little girl of ten years old was unwittingly present at one of these interviews, and said, 'I shall tell papa, when he comes back, how kind that forester is to you, dear mamma.'

"The pair exchanged glances.

"'Go, my darling,' she said, 'and heat the large stove to bake some bread ready for papa.'

"'I have.'

"'Go again, and make it hotter, that papa's bread may be brown.'

"'Oh! mamma, it's red-hot now.'

"'Come down, then, and help me to bake.'

"She seized her daughter by the heels, and threw her in!

"After some hours, the peasant-husband returned.

"'I smell something burning,' said he.

"'Tis but the meat preparing for your supper.'

"'Meat, flesh—it appears to me like human flesh—WHERE IS NINA?'

"A shot through his head was her reply.

"His wife had seized his gun and fired; then donning his clothes, she joined the brigand band with the forester. This only occurred last July."

The reciter of the tragedy was himself tragic in appearance, dressed almost as a peasant, and with rolling eyes of wildest Calabrian expression; despite his kindnesses, Mamma was always afraid of him; which fear was not decreased by his saying, in a state of excitement, "there were people whose blood he could drink." The following evening I foolishly asked him to recite us some story still more horrible, as if that were possible; but he actually began one so dreadful we could not listen to it, and which had only happened the week before.

What with the earthquakes, the female-robber, and the fear of offending our friend with the rolling eyes, Mamma began to think we had been lo

enough in the country, and had better float away by the next steamer; this was daily expected, should the weather be fine, as Paolo has no port, but a tolerably sheltered beach, and several steamers stop for merchandise on their way to and from Naples. One is much larger and superior to the others, the Sorrento, and for it we waited. The temperature had again become mild, but there were occasional drizzling showers, which the population considered sufficient to prevent them working in the fields, but not from standing and smoking in the streets; fortunately for us—as to sit and watch them and their gestures from the windows was quite amusement enough. They had added comfortable woollen caps with long bright tassels, beneath their hats; we locked in a tall fellow, who was the bearer of some more good things, and made him stand to be sketched, covered with blushes. He had brought various specimens of local wines from our friend, whose generosity seemed to increase with our stay—true specimen of the national character! all in extremes, like their rivers, which either rush in impetuous torrents, or dry up and leave a harsh, arid bed, but never flow calmly enough to reflect.

Various of the monks returned our visit during

the day—good-humoured fatties, who thrived upon their bread and fish diet, the rules forbidding meat. They had not much conversation, no one at Paolo receiving any education beyond what nature gives; spelling-books being reserved for the secretaries of the upper classes. The landlord's son, the little monk I mentioned, was an embryo Franciscan, having been "promised" on his recovery from some dangerous infantile illness. I begged his father not to force him into a cell against his will; he replied that he had no idea of doing so; "but it is your wish, Cico dear?"

"Yes, Tata," answered the interesting child.

The next day the weather was fine, and we had been assured the Vapore would arrive, yet the hours wore away without it appearing; at length our *entourage* confessed it never came on Sundays, the custom-house and public offices being closed everywhere. This incident painfully displayed their proneness to deviate in trivial matters from strict veracity; and though feeling deeply the thousand delicate kindnesses of these foreigners towards us, I cannot be blind to the fact, that in the great test of character—truth—the English stand pre-eminent: not but that in great matters, where their honour has been engaged, they may b

trusted; but in the little every-day passages of life, partly from volubility, and partly from a good-natured wish to say what is pleasing, they are liable to slips of the tongue which would degrade an English gentleman. Still, as we had not a single disagreeable dispute in the whole of Sicily and Calabria, I cannot be severe on their morals; and on the following day, when the Sorrento really came, and the whole place seemed to have assembled to launch the boat which was to bear us away, we felt a strong pull at our hearts. Farewell Calabria, coast, and mountains!

The vessel danced about briskly in the bays of Policastro and Salerno; then rocked us to sleep in the smoother waters of Sorrento, to be awoke at Naples by booming cannon, announcing the monarch's name-day, San Ferdinando. We landed, drove to an hotel, took our places amidst civilised people, and felt there was such a thing as living without being adored.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A REST AT NAPLES AND PORTICI.

CONFUSION OF NAPLES—INDIFFERENT HOTELS AND LANDLORDS—FLIGHT TO PORTICI—TRIPS INTO THE CAPITAL—EQUIPAGES OF THE SHOPKEEPERS—PONCINELLO—NEAPOLITAN GIRLS—ANECDOTES OF THE KING AND THE ENGLISH—A TRAGEDY OF REAL LIFE.

NAPLES, kind reader, is a place you must touch at, see its bay, views, and museum, then fly off. Poetical heroine as she has always been, laughing and glowing from her circling sapphire shores through many a line of verse, the shock of seeing her in her own streets is too great, like visiting some bright Italian beauty in her scrambling morning hours.

The scene of contention upon your landing is but a commencement of the strife which will last during your stay; and the half-clad *facchini*, who tear your luggage asunder, are not more rapacious than the landlords awaiting your piastres. Even to clear our small bags through the custom-house, required the Swiss guard's bayonet, the Italian sentinel being busy begging from us.

May you be more fortunate in the ark of refuge you drive up to! No pleasant greetings awaited us, but rude and extortionate independence. Fatigue and indisposition kept us some days at the "Crocelle," till able to remove to a comfortable fire-place and provisions of good quality, both of which we found at the "Iles Britanniques." But stop, reader, before you follow us: the landlord was still of the *antipatico* genus; and after allowing a month's repose in his house, at a very expensive rate, began trying experiments upon us, by proposing, as people were coming rather plentifully from Rome, that we should pay eight guineas a week for a sitting-room and bed-room on the third floor. Finding he had been mistaken in his subjects, he was inclined to bring impertinence to the aid of his science; but we firmly resisted the application, and on leaving for Vesuvius, some days afterwards, merely gave the sum previously agreed upon, which was prudently taken.

Portici looked so peaceful and pretty amidst its vineyards of Lachryma Christi, we thought we might find repose in one of its white cottages, and took a little casino, whose chief furniture was a brilliant red silk canopy, and a view of Ischia, Baia, Capri, and Sorrento. This was a very superior

prospect during breakfast, to that of Americans combing their whiskers, and performing their toilet in the slop-bowl, as at the last hotel. The attendant household consisted of an old fisherman, named Gennaro, for *intendente;* a pert perroquet, called Concetta, for usefulness; the two daughters of the house, who constituted themselves something between ladies'-maids and ladies-in-waiting; and an old woman to keep them in order, while their father was occupied in the town.

Placed close to the gates of Herculaneum, less than half-an-hour's distance from Pompei and Castlemare, with Vesuvius for a promenade, and romantic beach and rocks for rambles, it is surprising Portici has not had the homage of an hotel such as English people could inhabit. Ten minutes railway took us to Naples, where we saw the papers, had a kind reception and lunch with our banker's wife, Mrs. T.; and on Sundays we went to the English church, at the door of which the request of four carlini each person seemed rather hard on fathers of families. The attendance was small. In the afternoon of that day every Neapolitan, whose ingenuity can manage it, gets into a vehicle of some kind, and drives along the Mergellina, a new road to Baia; the shopkeepers' equipages

are not the least elegant; one from the Toledo appears in four different kinds a week; others, less wealthy, "combine" with two or three families to keep a carriage between them, for "Corso" on Sundays and Thursdays, it being let to strangers on off-days. In summer their great pleasure is driving up and down through the Grotto of Posilippo, then supping in a boat on the sea.

The great San Carlo theatre seems to require the riches of London or St. Petersburg to make the quality of the performance equal its size. It has, however, presented a peculiar novelty of late years in the ballet department, by clothing the pretty legs of its dancers in semi-Turkish blue silks. The really national playhouse is the San Carlino, where some witty piece is always represented under the name of "Poncinello," and the acting is so exquisite, that it tells its tale through all the mazes of the squeaking Neapolitan dialect. The subject of the piece was appropriately "Il Forestiere" (The Stranger); not our lugubrious Mrs. Haller, but a young man being initiated into some of the funny national ways, which were quizzed *con amore*. On paying a visit to his "intended," the poor man was dismayed at not being able to get any other word out of her than "*per servirla*"

(at your service), an expression of politeness used to an absurd extent, and among the lower classes synonymous to "*da mi qualche cosa*" (begging); at last he went away, saying "Bestia." The reply was still "*per servirla!*"

Our girls at Portici were more advanced in the art of flirtation. It took up all the duenna's time to keep them from the windows when the custom-house and railway officials were passing; but once Nanetta managed to throw a carnation through the Venetian blind, coyly saying, "Avete qualche cosa per me?" ("Have you anything for me?") They were never allowed to move out of the house, except with their father on Sundays, and minute embroidery seemed their only resource. I tried to get them to read a little, but they could not make out a word, though a master was engaged, at a salary of *six carlini a month*, to give them instruction every morning.

Looking over his rusty shoulder next day, to try and find out his method, it proved to be—writing a love-letter from the dictation of the wicked little heroine of the carnation, to her affianced lover then absent.

Their style of dress was, rags in the morning, and occasional bursts of finery in the afternoon: the

drawers were full of expensive clothes and trinkets, nearly all put on at once for some Church festival. They always kept a lamp burning before the Madonna's image in our ante-room; were rearing corn in flower-pots to place, according to ancient custom, around the Corpus Christi on Good Friday, and had already dyed a basketful of purple Easter eggs. Being Lent, meat was scarce, but fish plentiful, particularly a delicacy called the "ink-stand," and *frutti di mare* (sea-anemones), which the fishermen always brought straight to the Casino. They took the opportunity one morning, of mysteriously asking "if we went on the beach in search of treasure?" they having seen us picking up shells and sea-weed.

These mariners tried for three weeks to find a day fit to take us across to Ischia, a proof that the climate is not perpetually summer-like. The violence of the winds is best expressed by the people's own character of them: that from the north "blowing back one's nails;" that from the south making the proverb, "It has been done by the sirocco," to describe anything stupid or heavy. The complaint of a foreign invalid must be very peculiar to be cured by such airy remedies. Travellers should never be without a simple medicine, prescribed by

a native doctor for an attack of what he called "internal rheumatism:" it is the dried skin of a pomegranate, boiled in two pints of water, and a glassful taken an hour before each meal.

The king's garden around his palace was a charming walk; the evergreen oaks so thickly knotting over the paths, they even baffled the rays of the subtle sun. His Majesty was said by the Porticese to be humane, kind, and generous. An English gentleman, who had requested an audience to beg his Majesty's influence towards forwarding the railway works, for which caution-money had been deposited five years previously, told us his manner was excellent. Being rather pressed by the petitioner, he said,

"Do you believe I am a gentleman?"

"Yes, Sire."

"Then, on the honour of a gentleman, you shall have what you wish!" replied he, laying his hand on his heart.

The works were ordered to be immediately commenced; but ere the ground had been stirred, a command arrived from the jealous minister, "to leave them alone," thus baffling the king's authority.

The English, on hearing of the great earthquake

in Basilicata and Bari, subscribed a large sum for the sufferers, on the condition of being allowed to distribute it through one or two of their own countrymen, which proposition, though not flattering, was accepted. The Germans were still more practical, paying the people wages for building their own houses. Since the great shock, eighty small earthquakes had been observed at the meteorological tower on Vesuvius.

One of the many really fine villas with which Portici is surrounded, became some years since the scene of fearful events. The mistress was a beautiful French countess, with whom her Italian husband had fallen in love while attached to his embassy in Paris.

He had merely left her for a few hours, and she had fallen asleep with her child in her arms, when a figure darkened her terrace, advanced to the bed-side, and seized her casket of jewels. The frightened babe screamed, and the dagger of the robber had all but penetrated its breast, when by a frantic effort the mother turned it against her own, and fell dead on the floor.

The assassin fled.

The child, silenced by terror, crept beneath the clothes: a large black cat, attracted to the warmth,

entered, and coiled itself upon its body. In the morning, the infant's eyes were found fixed upon the animal—but had lost their sight for ever.

The marquis, who returned to find his wife murdered and child blinded, retired for the remainder of his days to Amalfi. His daughter there grew up so beautiful, that a Sicilian gentleman, exploring the coast, fell in love with her, as she was leaning over her pavilion, listening like a syren to the waves.

He became acquainted, was loved, and they stood before the altar. At the moment the ring was placed on her finger, her father staggered and fell. *It was the same with which he had espoused her mother!*

The murderer had fled to Sicily, and died there, leaving his son wealthy, and that son was now standing unconsciously in the presence of his father's victims.

The young lady was borne home and expired from the shock.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PASSING THROUGH ROME AND FLORENCE.

CORAL AND LAVA—MOLA DI GAETA—A THEFT AT TERRACINA—BUFFALOES AND THEIR MASTERS—ENTERING THE ETERNAL CITY—THE HOLY WEEK—DELIGHTS OF THE CAMPAGNA—A FORTNIGHT AT CIVITA VECCHIA—FLORENCE IN SPRING—A LAST ADVENTURE—FLOWERS, AND FAREWELL.

WITH a basket of branching coral, and green lavas from the brilliant stream left by the last eruption, we entered an excellent vetturino carriage by appointment, at the Naples railway-station, and set off for Rome.

Mola di Gaeta's round nose lying on the sea was the first prominent object. The women with heads of clustering curls, were graceful as the slopes and gardens around. The king's residence is a fortress.

At Terracina must be said, "*Vale*, Vesuvius!" 'tis the last time you will see the delicate smoke, rising from a shadowy cone, in mythical distance; but be not too much absorbed: take a hint from a

little sleight of hand practised upon our property in the Hôtel Royal. At the moment of entering the carriage to quit, Mamma missed her best Cashmere shawl; "I will run up for it," said the waiter. He was some time away, then returned, exclaiming, "There is no shawl there!" Yet she had left it on the back of a chair. Fruitless search was made, and though the landlord was really responsible, who could stop to make him replace it? Future travellers had better run up themselves, when anything is forgotten.

Splendid buffaloes announced the Pontine Marshes, whose only *ignis fatuus* were lively sunbeams. The mid-day meal was at a lone house called the Forum, and groups of herders, in glorious costume, were stretched on the grass, reading to each other from a book entitled "The Life of a Christian." The women wore on the head the white "cascata," edged with lace.

Albano, pretty as its name, stands in view of the Eternal City, at whose gates judicious payments avoided long delays. After driving to every hotel about the Piazza di Spagna, all filled by the approach of the Holy Week, we found room at the Minerva, near the Pantheon; and sat down to dinner in a vast hall garnished with gods and goddesses

filled by 170 people, nearly all French; who, as we had no crinoline on, luckily left us in peace.

Of Rome, I will not venture to write; its magnificence, interest, and misery, touch the heart of the contemplator by their own eloquence; the absent must add imagination to the most perfect descriptions. The Holy Week is a painful subject: people of all nations assembling to gaze, as at a spectacle, upon what is intended for sacred homage; irreverent as hordes have ever been. St. Peter's is the last place in which to view a brilliant ceremony; its own sublimity covering all else with insignificance.

Of the Campagna, which seems to have no friends to speak well of it, let me say what delight its good qualities gave us. No crabbed enclosure prevents you driving across any part of its vast surface, or obliges you to seek a road. On the ground supposed to yield nothing but barrenness, the sweetest spring flowers choose to grow wherever they can secure the slightest shelter; at each moment noble ruins rise, forming, with background of Sabine hills, subjects to draw and muse upon for hours too swiftly flying; herds of the Roman ox graze round ancient homesteads, whose inhabitants, with purest language and gracious manner, welcome the rambling strangers

in, and set rich milk before them; here and there, in an old tomb, lives a labourer, with a porcupine or two spreading their quills in corners, and a flask of wine, cool as Falernian, standing on the stones. Would you romantically learn Italian? go and explore the Campagna: would you keep health and strength? gallop over its smooth sea of grass.

How do you like the idea, reader, of being detained a fortnight at Civita Vecchia? and being driven for resources to the pebbles on the shore, and the contemplation of convicts (murderers in red, malefactors in saffron), for animation? We shall never regret the delay, arising from a dislike to embark in rough weather, as it gave us the opportunity of seeing French character in a most amiable light. Forming, as they do, a little colony of naval, military, and civil officials, with their families, they manage to keep up an agreeable society among themselves, and losing no time in the strife of etiquette, meet in turn at each other's houses, determined to be happy. The receptions at the Admiral's were a mixture of *esprit* and cards; at other houses, the same, with music preluded by welcomes. There is an immense difference between the Parisian, and good, wholesome, provincial character among the French. We were at the Hôtel de l'Europe, bett

in all but appearance than the other near the fort; whose huge portico entraps passengers to taste the rubbish inside. Being afterwards at a court reception, in passing through Florence, we were amused at the grand-duchess asking us, "What sort of an inn did you find at Civita Vecchia?"

Florence was in the season of her perfection; the few weeks dividing the Russian cold of winter from the Indian heat of summer. Her awakened population drove with delight in the vernal Cascine, midst showers of flowers from pretty straw-hatted girls; and lounged in cool twilight by the Arno, their river of silver, reflecting shadows of gold, skimmed by fire-flies.

All were in humour genial as the air, whose softening breeze reached e'en to the artists' studios. We were gazing in that of Romanelli one morning, at his beautiful statue of "Italy bearing the Chalice of Suffering," when, after a few words of salutation, he exclaimed:—

"Signora, would you like to stand for a statue?"

We laughed, and were rather perplexed; but he added, "I have so much of the classic; your study would be a great variety, if only as a bust:" and, bringing a pair of compasses, he took the measurements, and moulded an exact likeness on a small

scale. His master, the late great sculptor Bartolini, to whose position and studio he has succeeded, used also to be seized by the same romantically artistic fancies, and the walls were surrounded by busts in such numbers it appeared as if St. Ursula and her 11,000 virgins had sheltered there.

At that moment, Countess Guicciola had just ordered her curls to be re-chiselled; the "Four Seasons" were waiting to be twisted into candelabra for an Irish nobleman; the "Betrothed," veiled and crowned, stood on a pedestal, looking interesting as her circumstances; "William Tell's son," kneeling at the foot of a tree, was glancing upwards at the apple cleft by his father's arrow; and "Innocence" clasped a dove over an infant's tomb. All Romanelli's works are full of expression, and himself a most agreeable, intelligent man; his gentlemanly character can be imagined, by his presenting us the bust, beautifully executed in alabaster, saying, "it had afforded him a little passing relaxation." A way of preparing alabaster has recently been discovered, which makes it resemble the finest marble.

Another worthy citizen of the town of Lorenzo the Magnificent is Mr. Horace H——; those tunate enough to know and visit him at M

will see to what perfection an Italian villa can be brought by English finish; and also how all rich bankers ought to entertain. After dinner, many Florentine ladies drove out to pay their evening visit, and joined in a large round game at billiards. At the moment of leaving, the nightingales were singing so sweetly in the aromatic shrubs, their chorus would almost chase sleep away.

Now all the majestic mountain avenues for leaving Italy lie open before us,—we choose the Splugen, cross Como's lake, and arrive at the first châlet, as nature is withdrawing her drugget of snow, and letting her summer carpeting appear. The flowers, immediately taking the hint, are springing up rapidly on all sides: the gentian, of deep Mediterranean blue, and the forget-me-not, pale as the northern sky, grow together at their country's frontier; culling a little sprig of the latter for you, kind reader, I leave you in their right pleasant company.

TO THE SPRING FLOWERS.

BY MY MOTHER.

Rise, little Crocus, from your tomb,
And haste to mount your golden dome;
Those little spires of silv'ry green
Have long in close attendance been,

Together with your earliest friend,
Pale Snowdrop, and her graceful bend;
There's little peeping Primrose, too,
An old acquaintance would renew;
Whilst underneath a fresh-turned sod
Sweet Violet gives her downcast nod;
This morn we walked the fields around,
And here and there a Daisy found,
  Quick—for fear of any loss
  Bound them with the dewy moss,
As sportive lambkins seemed to say,
"Don't pluck those dainty heads away."
With what deep int'rest Nature's fraught!
One cannot have a vacant thought;
  The very stones upon the shore
  Wild waves are daily dashing o'er,
  We e'en 'mid them may find a flower!*

* The Sea-Anemone.

THE END.

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